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The SOVEREIGNTY and WISDOM of GOD  
displayed in the AFFLICTIONS of MEN,  
together with a CHRISTIAN deport-  
ment under them.

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B E I N G

The SUBSTANCE of several

S E R M O N S  
O N

ECCLES. vii. 13. PROV. xvi. 19. and 1 PET. v. 6.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

Some S E R M O N S on the NATURE of  
CHURCH-COMMUNION,

From 1 COR. x. 17.

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By the late REVEREND and LEARNED *K*  
MR THOMAS BOSTON  
Late MINISTER of the GOSPEL at ETTRICK.

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M, DCC, LXXX.





## P R E F A C E.

**M**R THOMAS BOSTON, the youngest of seven children, born 1676, of creditable religious parents, in the town of Dunse, where they had some heritage; licensed to preach 1697, ordained minister at Simprin 1699, married 1700, to Katharine Brown, of good extract in the parish of Culrofs, a gentlewoman of singular wisdom, and many rare endowments, (by whom he had a good many children, of whom two sons and two daughters survive them) transported to Ettrick 1707, died 1732, near five years before his spouse, in the 56th year of his age.

He was of a stature above the middle size, of a venerable, amiable aspect, with his own hair, originally black, of a strong and fruitful genius, of a lively imagination, (such as affords what is called ready wit, which, instead of cultivating, he laid under a severe restraint,) of tender affections, a clear and solid judgement; his temper candid, modest, cautious, benevolent, obliging, and courteous; had a natural aversion to any thing rude or uncivil in words or behaviour, and a delicate feeling in case of meeting with ought of that sort, could be heavy with and severe in his words when there was just occasion, or he judged the same necessary.

He was early called by divine grace, all along afterwards exercised unto godliness, walked indeed with God in all his ways, daily acknowledging him, frequent in solemn extraordinary applications to Heaven, (namely upon every new emergent of duty, difficulty, or trial) followed with evident, comfortable, and confirming testimonies of divine acceptance and audience; a diligent, judicious observer, recorder, and improver of the dispensations of divine providence, in connection with the word, his own frame and walk, and consequently of great experience in religion: He was accurately and extensively regardful of the divine law, in all manner of life and conversation, (even in things

that escape the notice of the most part of Christians) of a tender conscience, carefully watching against and avoiding the appearance of evil, compassionate and sympathising with the distressed, charitable to the needy, (to the degree of religiously setting apart the tenth of his worldly substance yearly for their supply) a dutiful husband, an indulgent father, a sincere, a faithful, and an affectionate friend; to which he had a particular cast in his temper, which proved a rich blessing to them who were favoured with his friendship.

He was a considerable scholar in all the parts of theological learning, and excelled in some of them. What he was for a humanist, (even towards the latter end of his days) his translation of his own work, on the Hebrew accentuation, into good Roman Latin, will abundantly testify; he was well seen in the Greek, and for the skill he attained in the Hebrew, he will, we are satisfied, in ages to come, be admired, and had in honour by the learned world, especially when it is understood under what disadvantages, in what obscurity and seclusion from learned assistances the work was composed, and when it is considered how far, notwithstanding he has out-stripped all that went before him in that study, namely, of the Hebrew accentuation; he understood the French, and, for the sake of comparing translations, could read the Dutch Bible. There were few pieces of learning that he had not some good taste of; but all this knowledge behaved to be otherways discovered than by his professing of it. He was a hard student of indefatigable application; so that whatever he was heartily engaged in, he knew not how to quit, till, by help from Heaven, and incessant labour he got through it. Had a great knowledge and understanding of human nature, of the most proper methods of addressing it, and of the most likely handles for catching hold of it. He had an admirable talent at drawing a paper, which made Mr Bailie of Jerviswood, a very able judge, say, (when Mr Boston was clerk of the synod of Merse and Teviotdale,) That he was the best clerk he had ever known in

in any court, civil or ecclesiastical. An admirer of other mens parts and gifts, liberally giving them their due praise, even tho' in some things they differed from him : far from censorious, assuming, or detracting.

As a minister, he had on his spirit a deep and high sense of divine things ; was mighty in the scriptures, in his acquaintance with the letter, with the spirit and sense of them, in happily applying and accomodating them, for explaining and illustrating the subject. His knowledge and insight in the mystery of Christ was great, though a humbling sense of his want of it was like to have quite sunk and laid him by, after he began to preach. He had a peculiar talent for going deep into the mysteries of the gospel, and, at the same time, making them plain, making intelligible their connection with and influence upon gospel holiness ; notable instances of which may be seen in his most valuable treatise on the Covenant, and in his sermons of Christ in the Form of a Servant. His invention was rich, but judiciously bounded, his thoughts were always just, and often new, his expressions proper and pure, his illustrations and similies often surprising, his method natural and clear, his delivery grave and graceful, with an air of earnestness, meekness, assurance, and authority, tempered together. No wonder his ministrations in holy things were all of them dear and precious to the saints. He was fixed and established upon solid and rational grounds in the reformation-principles, in opposition to popery, prelacy, superstition, and persecution. Was pleasant and lively in conversation, but always with a decorum to his character ; quite free of the sourness of temper, or *ascetical* rigidity, that generally possesses men of a retired life. He fed and watched with diligence the flock over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer, and, notwithstanding his eager pursuit of that study, which was his delight, he abated nothing of his preparation for the Sabbath, nor of his work abroad in the parish ; nor did he so much as use the short hand, whereof he was master, but al-

ways wrote out his sermons fair, and generally as full as he preached them; far from serving the Lord with that which cost him nothing. It was his delight to spend and be spent in the work of the gospel. Was a faithful, and, at the same time, a prudent reprovcr of sin. Was endued with a rich treasure of Christian wisdom and prudence, without craft or guile, whereby he was exceeding serviceable in judicatories, and excellently fitted for counsel in intricate cases. Zeal and knowledge were in him united to a pitch rarely to be met with. Had a joint concern for purity and peace in the church; no man more zealous for the former, and, at the same time, more studious of the latter, having felt so much of the mischief of division and separation. Was exceeding cautious and scrupulous of any thing new or unprecedented, until he was thoroughly satisfied of its necessity and grounds. It was his settled mind, that solidly and strongly to establish the truth, was in many cases the best, the shortest, and the most effectual way to confute error, without irritating and inflaming the passions of men, to their own and the truth's prejudice: therefore, in this explication and vindication of the protestant doctrine, in a paroxysm quarellcd and condemned in a certain book, he answered all and every body, but took notice expressly of nobody. He obeyed the voice, 1 Tim. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things*: Being in an uncommon degree dead to the world; finding, says he, in the account of his life, the business of it ensnaring to the mind, I had neither heart nor hand for it. On all which accounts he was much respected and regarded by not only his brethren that differed from him, but generally by all sorts of men. To conclude, he was a scribe singularly instructed unto the kingdom,—happy in finding out acceptable words,—a workman that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,—a burning and a shining light. *The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*

Though a skilful hand might, in fewer words, have drawn



drawn his character to much better purpose. There is no partiality by overdoing in what is said; his intimate friendship for many years, and the account of his own life, done by himself, are allowed for competent evidences: but the hearing him preach one sermon would have said something that cannot be said now.

His removal in the juncture wherein he was taken away, some are satisfied, had on several accounts more of the divine anger in it, with respect to this church, than is commonly apprehended.

It might have been more edifying, had there been room for it here, to have heard of him in his own words, from the general account of his life, by him addressed to his children: Out of which we shall, with their leave, subjoin only a few touches towards the close of it, as follows:

“ Thus also I was much addicted to peace, andaverse from controversy; though once engaged therein, I was set to go through with it. I had no great difficulty to retain a due honour and charity for my brethren differing from me in opinion and practice; but then I was in no great hazard neither of being swayed by them to depart from what I judged truth or duty. Withal, it was easy to me to yield to them in things wherein I found not myself in conscience bound up. Whatever precipitant steps I have made in the course of my life, which I desire to be humbled for, rashness in conduct was not my weak side. But since the Lord, by his grace, brought me to consider things, it was much my exercise to discern sin and duty in particular cases, being afraid to venture on things, until I should see myself called thereto; but, when the matter was cleared to me, I generally stuck fast by it, being as much afraid to desert the way which I took to be pointed out to me. I never had the art of making rich, nor could I ever heartily apply myself to the managing of secular affairs. Even the secular way of managing the discipline of the church was so unacceptable to  
“ me,



“ me, that I had no heart to dip in the public church management. What appearances I made at any time in these matters were not readily in that way.”

“ And thus have I given some account of the days of my vanity. Upon the whole, I bless my God, in Jesus, that ever he made me a Christian, and took an early dealing with my soul; that ever he made me a minister of the gospel, and gave me some insight into the doctrine of his grace; and that ever he gave me the blest Bible, and brought me acquainted with the originals, and especially with the Hebrew text. The world hath along been a step-dame to me, and whatsoever I would have attempted to nestle in it, there was a thorn of uneasiness laid for me. Man is born crying, lives complaining, and dies disappointed from that quarter. *All is vanity and vexation of spirit. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*”

Habitual unreconciledness to the cross, and a palpable deficiency in many of the duties incumbent on us, as members of the body of Christ, mightily mar our Christian comfort, our edification, our usefulness: and instead of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our holy profession. For remedy in both cases, the Lord in his kind providence, is sending us fresh assistance in the two following treatises. Both the subjects are set in a new and in an engaging light. It is not amiss that the reader should know that the former, namely, that of the trook in one's lot, was amongst the last subjects the blessed author handled; and that the revising of it so far, for he got not through his notes, was amongst his last works with the pen. We shall leave it to exercise the reader's attention how far he himself revised; and where we have only his notes as he preached them. May the same divine blessing, which the author often and earnestly sought to accompany ought of his that was, or shall be called forth for the service of the church, go along with these treatises that follow. *Alex. Golden. Gab. Wilson. H. Davidson.*

The

THE SOVEREIGNTY and WISDOM of GOD  
displayed in the AFFLICTIONS of MEN.

ECCLES. vii. 13.

*Consider the work of God: For who can make that  
straight which he hath made crooked.*

A Just view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them: And that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense. For it is the light of the word alone that represents them justly, discovering in them the work of God, and consequently designs becoming the divine perfections. These perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, one has a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view that Solomon, in the preceeding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favour of certain things, that, to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed grievous and shocking. He pronounceth *the day of one's death to be better than the day of his birth*, namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, hath led a life to the honour of God, and service of his generation, and thereby raised himself to the good and savoury name, *better than precious ointment*, ver. 1. In like manner, he pronounceth *the house of mourning to be preferable to the house of feasting, sorrow to laughter, and a wise man's rebuke to a fool's song*; for that, howbeit the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the

the former are more profitable, ver. 2.—6. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill usage, *oppression making a wise man mad*, but also from its smiles and caresses, *a gift destroying the heart*; therefore, since whatever way it goes, there is danger, he pronounceth the *end of every worldly thing better than the beginning thereof*, ver. 7. 8. And from the whole, he justly infers, that it is better to be humble and patient, than proud and impatient, under afflicting dispensations; since, in the former case, one wisely submits to what is really best; in the latter he fights against it, ver. 8. And he dehorts from being angry with our lot, because of the adversity found therein, ver. 9. cautions against making odious comparisons of former and present times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God, ver. 10. and, against that querulous and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables one to make the best of every thing, and giveth life in killing circumstances, ver. 11. 12. And then a particular remedy, consisting in due application of that wisdom, towards the taking a just view of the case, *Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?*

In which words are proposed, *First*, The remedy itself. *Secondly*, The suitableness thereof. *First*, The remedy itself, is a wise eyeing of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard upon us: *Consider the work (or see thou the doing) of God*, to wit, in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of thy lot, the crosses thou findest in it. Thou seest very well the cross itself; yea, thou turnest it over and over in thy mind, and leisurely views it on all sides; thou lookest withal to this and the other second cause of it; and so thou art in a foam and a fret: But wouldst thou be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up thine eyes towards heaven, *see the doing*  
of

of God in it, the operation of his hand : Look at that and consider it well ; eye the first cause of the crook in thy lot, behold how it is *the work of God, his doing*. Secondly, As for the suitableness of this remedy, that view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still indecent risings of heart, and quiet us under it : *For who can* (that is, none can) *make that straight which God hath made crooked?* As to the crook in thy lot, God hath made it ; and it must continue while he will have it so. Shouldst thou ply thine utmost force to even it, or make it straight, thine attempt will be vain : It will not alter for all thou canst do, only he who made it can mend it, or make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means, at once, to silence and to satisfy men, and so bring them unto a dutiful submission to their maker and governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now, we take up the purpose of the text in these three doctrines.

DOCT. I. Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.

DOCT. II. What God sees meet to mar, one will not be able to mend in his lot.

DOCT. III. The considering of the crook in the lot, as the work of God, or of his making, is a proper means to bring one to a Christian deportment under it.

DOCT. I. Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.

Here two things fall to be considered, namely, the crook itself, and God's making of it.

I. As to the crook itself, the crook in the lot, for the better understanding thereof, these few things following are premised, 1. There is a certain train or course of events, by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world : And that is our lot, as being allotted to us by the sovereign



sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, *in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways.* This train of events is widely different to different persons, according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign manager, who ordereth mens conditions in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere. 2. In that train or course of events, some fall out cross to us, and against the grain; and these make the crook in our lot. While we are here, there will be cross events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Some times things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but by and by, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and pains us, as when having made a wrong step, we begin to halt. 3. Every body's lot in this world hath some crook in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons: they look about, and taking a distant view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is straight, and just to one's wish: so they pronounce their neighbour's lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict: there is no perfection here, no lot out of heaven without a crook. For as to *all the works that are done under the sun, behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, Eccles. i. 14. 15.* Who would have thought but Haman's lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honour, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king's favours? Yet there was, at the same time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that *all this availed him nothing, Esther v. 13.* Every one feels for himself, where he is pinched, though others perceive it not. No body's lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when mens passions, having got up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, all is wrong with them, nothing right: but though in hell that tale is, and



and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world; for there, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed, Luke xvi. 25. but here it always holds good, that it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22. Lastly, The crook in the lot came into the world by sin: it is owing to the fall, Rom. v. 12. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, under which death the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of comfort or prosperity, is, in scripture-style, exprest by living, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. John iv. 50, 51. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, as they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, as it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till, dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

These being premised, *a crook in the lot* speaks, in the general, two things, (1.) *Adversity*. (2.) *Continuance*. Accordingly it makes *a day of adversity*, opposed to the *day of prosperity*, in the verse immediately following the text.

The *crook* in the lot, is, *First*, Some one or other piece of *adversity*. The prosperous part of one's lot, which goes forward according to one's wish, is the straight and even part of it; the adverse part, going a contrary way, is the crooked part thereof. God hath intermixed these two in mens condition in this world; that as there is some prosperity therein, making the straight-line, so there is also some adversity, making the crooked. The which mixture hath place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that *in the world you shall have tribulation*, but even in the lot of all, as already observed. *Secondly*, It is adversity of some *continuance*. We do not reckon it a crooked thing, which, tho' forcibly bended and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. There are twinges of the rod of adversity, which passing like a stitch in one's side, all is immediately set to rights again: one's lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud vanish ere he

is aware. But under the crook one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook evened. So *the crook in the lot* is adversity, continued for shorter or longer time.

Now there is a threefold *crook in the lot* incident to the children of men. (1.) One made by a cross dispensation, which, howsoever in itself passing, yet hath lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers of Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left *weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not*, Matt. ii. 18. A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go halting all along after. *As the fishes are taken in an evil net,—So are the sons of men snared in an evil time*, Eccles. ix. 12. The thing may fall out in a moment, under which the party shall go halting to the grave. (2) There is a crook made by a train of cross dispensations, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard one upon another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus in the case of Job; while one messenger of evil tidings *was yet speaking, another came*, Job i. 16. 17. 18. Cross events coming one upon the neck if another, *deep calling upon deep*, make a sore crook. In that case the party is like one, who, recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too; or, like unto one, who, travelling in an unknown mountaneous tract, after having with difficulty made his way over one mountain, is expecting to see the plain country, but instead thereof, there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. The crook in Asaph's lot had like to have made him give up all his religion, *until he went into the sanctuary, where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him*, Psal. lxxxi. 13—17. Solomon observes, *That there being just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked*, Eccles. viii. 14. Providence taking a run against them,

them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they be, whose life in no part thereof affords them experience of this, sure Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, John xxi. 18. Nor our Saviour all his days. (3.) There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with lasting effects thereof coming in the room of another removed. Thus one crook straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Want of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot, Gen. xxx. 1. That was at length evened to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, hard labour in travailing to bring forth, chap. xxxv. 16. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed; but the remove will be out of one wilderness station to another. When one part of the lot is evened, readily some other part thereof will be crooked.

More particularly, *the crook in the lot* hath in it four things of the nature of that which is crooked.

*First*, Disagreeableness. A crooked thing is wayward; and being laid to a rule answers it not, but declines from it. There is not in any body's lot, any such thing as a crook in respect of the will and purpose of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot, and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depth of infinite wisdom, before the world began, and it will answer it exactly without the least deviation, *all things being wrought after the counsel of his will*, Eph. i. 11. Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony. If Paul is to be bound at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, *it is the will of the Lord* it should be so, Acts xxi. 11. 14. Wherefore the greatest crook of the lot on earth, is straight in heaven: there is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every body's lot there is a crook in respect of their mind and inclina-

tion: The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonize with it. When divine providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness: the man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way; the will bends upward, the cross events press down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there, lies the crook. It is this disagreeableness which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us, in this our state of probation; in the which, if thou would approve thyself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, thou must quiet thyself, in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it should be according to thy mind, Job xxxiv. 23.

Secondly, Unfightliness. Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye: and no crook in the lot *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, making but an unfightly appearance, Heb. xii. 11. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts, to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shews a hurtful experience in his, in that kind, Psal. xxxix. 3. *While I was musing, the fire burned.* Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right-hand, whom the dying mother named Ben-oni, the son of my sorrow; by this means providing, that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook of his lot in the light of the holy word, which represents it, as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden slightliness in it, under a very unfightly outward appearance: perceiving the suitableness thereof to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God; and to the real and most valuable interest of the party; by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refined pleasure, in distresses, 2 Cor. xii. 10. But whatever the crook in the



the lot be to the eye of faith, it is not at all pleasing to the eye of sense.

*Thirdly, Unfitness for motion.* Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame, Prov. xxvi. 7. *The legs of the lame are not equal.* This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in their lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot, makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access, than the crook in the lot: nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore, saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 13. *Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.* They are to be pitied, then, who are labouring under it, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an observe in this case, which holds good unto this day, Job xii. 5. *He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease.*

*Lastly, Aptness to catch hold and entangle, like hooks, fish-hooks, Amos iv. 2.* The crook in the lot doth very readily make impression, to the rustling and fretting one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it to these dangerous purposes; the which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, ere he is aware, finds himself intangled as in a thicket, out of which he knows not how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick troubling a standing pool, the which not only raiseth up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and atheism in Asaph's case, Psal. lxxiii. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence:* As if he had said, there is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing that profiteth nothing; I was a fool to have been in care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is



this the pious Asaph ! How is he turned so quite unlike himself ! but the crook in the lot is the handle, whereby the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption even in the best.

This is the nature of the crook in the lot, Let us now observe what part of the lot it falls in.

And, in the general, three conclusions may be established upon this head. *1st*, It may fall in any part of the lot ; there is no exempted one in the case : For, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being *all as an unclean thing, we may all fade as a leaf*, Isa. lxiv. 6. The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels, in the case of different persons. And, in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that may prove a sinking weight unto me, which another would go very lightly under.

*2dly*, It may at once fall in many parts of the lot, the Lord calling, as in a solemn day, one's terror round about, Lam. ii. 22. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot ; but its name may be Gad, being but the forerunner of a troop which cometh. Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand. *3dly*, It often falls in the tender part, I mean the part of the lot wherein one is least able to bear it, or, at least thinks he is so. Psal. lv. 12. 13. *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it— But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.* If there is any one part of the lot, which of all others, one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God : in that thing wherein he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him ; for there is the grand competition with Christ. *I take from them the desires*

desires of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, Ezek. xxiv. 25. Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which, of all things, doth most rival him.

But more particularly, the crook may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

*First*, In the *natural* part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by the great God that formed all things. The parents of mankind Adam and Eve, were formed altogether sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body; but, in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make the crook in the lot of some: they have something unsightly or grievous about them. Crooks of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary, the best not exempted from them; and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. Tender eyes made the crook in the lot of Leah, Gen. xxix. 17. Rachel's beauty was balanced with barrenness, the crook in her lot, chap. xxx. 1. Paul the great apostle of the Gentiles, was, it should seem, no personable man, but of a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to condemn him, 2 Cor. x. 10. Timothy was of a crazy frame, weakly and sickly, 1 Tim. v. 23. And there is yet a far more considerable crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf and dumb. Some are weak to a degree in their intellectuals; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted and darkened, from the crazy bodies they are lodged in; an eminent instance whereof we have in the grave, wise and patient Job, *going mourning without the sun, yea, standing up and crying in the congregation*, Job xxx. 28.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, It may fall in the *honorary* part. There is an honour due to all men, the small as well as the great, 1 Pet. ii. 17. And that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed in the image of God. But in the sovereign disposal of holy providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here; they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This sometimes is the native consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as, in the case of Dinah, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honour, Gen. xxxiv. But where the Lord minds a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world; neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case, Psal. xxxi. 11. 12. 13. *They that did see me without fled from me: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many.*

*Thirdly*, It may fall in the *vocational* part. Whatever is men's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place therein. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful, Isa. liii, 1. Jeremiah met with such a train of discouragements and ill usage, in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was well near giving it up, saying, *I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name*, Jer. xx. 9. The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who *sow the fields*—and at times *God bleisseth them*—and *suffereth not their cattle to decrease*: But, again, *they are diminished and brought low thro' oppression, affliction, and sorrow*, Psalm cvii. 37. 38. Such a crook was made in Job's lot, after he had long stood even.

even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence, the husbandman carefully labouring his ground; the sheep-master *diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds*: the tradesman early and late at his business; the merchant diligently plying his watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant, without a word of divine appointment commanding their success: *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* Lam. iii. 37. People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face, providence crosseth their enterprizes, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavours unsuccessful, and so puts and keeps them still in straitening circumstances. *So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise*, Eccles. ix. 11. Providence interposing crooks the measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, and the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread: while, in the mean time, some one or other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race, and carry the prize: the weak win the battle and enrich themselves with the spoil; and the bread falls into the lap of the fool.

*Lastly*, It may fall in the relational part. Relations are the joints of society, and there the crook in the lot may take place, one smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comfort; yet they often run the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relations. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling,



ling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, Job xvi. 7. *Thou hast made desolate all my company*; meaning his dear children, every one of whom he had laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them; the which, in virtue of their relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, Matth. xv. 22. *Have mercy on me, O Lord,—my daughter is grievously vexed.* Ephraim felt the smart of a course of family afflictions, when he called his son's name *Beriah*, because it went evil with his house, 1 Chron. vii. 23. Since all is not only vanity but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss, but, the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must, at one time or other, find he has but the more sources of sorrows to gush out, and spring in upon him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made here by their proving uncomfortable thro' the disagreeableness of their temper, disposition and way. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife, Job xix. 17. in Abigail's, by means of a surly, ill-tempered husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 25. in Eli's, through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children, chap. ii. 25. in Jonathan's, thro' the furious temper of his father, chap. xx. 30. 33. So do men oftentimes find their greatest crosses where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin hath unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive, and discountenancers of that which is good,  
and



and subjects turbulent and seditious : all these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives.

And thus far of the crook itself.

II. Having seen the crook itself, we are, in the next place, to consider of God's making it. And here it is to be shewn, 1. That it is of God's making. 2. How it is of his making. 3. Why he makes it.

FIRST, That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making, appears from these three considerations.

*First*, It cannot be questioned, but the crook in the lot, considered as the crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter thereof; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, be sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment or affliction. Now, as it may be, as such holily and justly brought on us, by sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it, Amos iii. 6 *Shall there evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil, but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

*Secondly*, It is evident, from the scripture-doctrine of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever he listeth, *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places*, Psal. cxxxv. 6. There is not any thing whatsoever befalls us without his over-ruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, bringeth us to, and fixeth us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who *hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation*, Acts xvii. 26. It over-rules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as *hairs of our head falling on the ground*, Matth. x. 29. 30. *A lot cast into the lap*, Prov. xvi. 33. Yea, the free acts of our will, whereby we chuse for ourselves, for even *the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord*,

*Lord, as the rivers of water*, xxi. 1. And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for 'the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,' Jer. x. 23. And this, whether these steps causing the crook to be deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; or whether they be undesigned, such as man-slaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbour with 'the head of the axe slipping from the helve, Deut. xix. 5. For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause; wherefore, in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 7. and, in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbours hand, Exod. xxi. 13.

*Lastly*, God hath, by an eternal decree, immoveable as mountains of brass (Zech. vi. 1.); appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, whereby the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and the deeps, the prosperity and adversity in the lot of the inhabitants thereof determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness thereto. The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts thereof, the building reared up of God, in the exact conformity to the plan in his decree, 'who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,' Eph. i. 11. So that there is never a crook in one's lot, but may be run up to this original. Hereof Job piously sets us an example, in his own case. Job xxiii. 13. 14. 'He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him.'

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, That we may see how the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks, and impure sinful ones.

*First*, There are pure and sinless crooks; the which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses: grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such were Lazarus's poverty, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth, John ix. 1. Now the crooks of this kind are of God's making, by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass, and causing them to be. He is the maker of the poor, Prov. xvii. 5. 'Who so mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker;' that is, reproacheth God who made him poor, according to that, 1 Sam. ii. 7. *The Lord maketh poor.* It is he that hath the key of the womb, and, as he sees meet, shuts it, 1 Sam. i. 5. or opens it, Gen. xxix. 31. And it is *he that formed the eye*, Psal. xciv. 9. And the man was 'born blind,' that the works of God should be made manifest in 'him,' John ix. 3. Therefore he saith to Moses, Exod. iv. 11. 'Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?' Such crooks in the lot are of God's making, in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth are.

*Secondly*, There are impure sinful crooks, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family-disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot, by the Sabeans and Chaldeans taking away his substance, and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments thereof. Thus one and the same thing may be, to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction,

laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as these of the former, for he neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirreth up to it; 'He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,' James i. 13. But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise over-ruling of them to some good end.

1st, He holily permits them, suffering men *to walk in their own ways*, Acts xiv. 16. Though he is not the author of these sinful crooks, causing them to be, by the efficacy of his power; yet if he did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for *he shutteth, and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. But he justly with-holds his grace, which the sinner does not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to the swing of his lust. Hos. iv. 17. 'Ephraim is joined to idols: Let him alone.' Psal. lxxxii. 11, 12. 'Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.' In which unhappy situation, the sinful crook doth, from the sinner's own proper motion, natively and infallibly follow; even as waters run down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, 'Israel walked in their own counsels,' ver. 12. And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just judge, punishing the sufferer by it. The which view of the matter silenced David under Shimei's curlings, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. 'Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him.'

2dly, He powerfully bounds them, Psal. lxxvi. 10. *The remainder of wrath* (namely, the creature's wrath) *shalt thou restrain*. Did not God bound these crooks, howsoever sore they are in any one's case, they would be yet sorer: But he says to the sinful instrument, as he said to the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves



‘waves be stayed.’ He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Hence it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as he by his powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance hereof we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil; but even to that great sinner, God set a bound in the case, ‘The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand,’ Job. 1. 12. Now Satan went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass thereof untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose, ver. 18, 19. But he could by no means move one step beyond it, to carry his point, which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and the crook sorer, nothing remained but that the bound set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he saith, ‘But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face,’ ch. ii. 5. and it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, ver. 6. ‘Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life;’ the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; ‘Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot, unto his crown,’ ver. 7. And had it not been for this bound, securing Job’s life, he, after finding this attempt unsuccessful too, had doubtless dispatched him for good and all.

3dly, He wisely over-rules them to some good purpose becoming the divine perfections. While the sinful instrument hath an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David’s family, Amnon’s design was to gratify a brutish lust; Absalom’s, to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition:

but God meant thereby to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan and the Sabeans and Chaldeans, his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job blaspheme, and theirs to gratify their covetousness: but God had another design therein becoming himself, namely, to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightness. Did not he wisely and powerfully over-rule the crooks made in mens lot, no good could come out of them: But he always over-rules them so, as to fulfil his own holy purposes thereby, howbeit the sinner meaneth not so; for his designs cannot miscarry, his counsel shall stand, Isa. xlv. 10. So the sinful crook is, by the over-ruling hand of God, turned about to his own glory, and his people's good in the end; according to the word, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom viii. 28. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' Thus Haman's plot, for the destruction of the Jews, was turned to the contrary, Esth. ix. 1. And the crook made in Joseph's lot, by his own brethren selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise over-ruling of it, had an issue well becoming the divine wisdom and goodness: both of which Joseph noticeth to them, Gen. l. 20. 'As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day to save much people alive.'

THIRDLY, It remains to enquire, Why God makes a crook in one's lot? and this is to be cleared by discovering the design of that dispensation: a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The design thereof seems to be, chiefly, seven-fold.

*First*, The trial of one's state, Whether one is in the state of grace, or not? Whether a sincere Christian,

tian, or a hypocrite? Tho' every affliction is trying, yet here, I conceive, lies the main providential trial a man is brought upon with reference to his state: forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of a continued course, one has occasion to open and shew himself again and again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision, in that momentuous point. It was plainly on this bottom that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, Whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God himself testified of him; or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alledged against him? And the trial hereof was put upon the crook to be made in his lot, Job i. 8,—12. and ii. 3,—6. Actordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu the last speaker, did, in their reasoning with him under his trial aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God took trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously, were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having followed the Lord fully: while others being tired out with them, their carcases fell in the wilderness: So he makes trial of men for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proven to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know 'what he should do, that he might inherit eternal life,' Mark x. 17. 21. Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away

all that he had, and follow him, ver. 21. 'Sell  
 ' whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor,—and  
 ' come, take up the cross and follow me.' Hereby  
 he was, that moment, in the court of conscience,  
 stripped of his great possessions; so that thenceforth he  
 could no longer keep them, with a good conscience,  
 as he might have done before. The man instantly  
 felt the smart of this crook made in his lot, 'he was  
 ' sad at that saying,' ver. 22. that is, immediately  
 upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, dis-  
 order and confusion of mind, his countenance chang-  
 ed, became cloudy and lowering, as the same word is  
 used, Mat. xvi. 3. He could not stand the test of that  
 crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God  
 in that point, but behoved to have it, at any rate,  
 according to his own mind. So he 'went away  
 ' grieved, for he had great possessions.' He went a-  
 way from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and tho'  
 with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down a-  
 gain on it, a violent possessor before the Lord,  
 thwarting the divine order. And there is no appear-  
 ance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever  
 he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

*Secondly*, Excitation to duty, weaning one from  
 this world, and prompting him to look after the hap-  
 pinefs of the other world. Many have been behold-  
 en to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came  
 to themselves, settled, and turned serious. Going  
 for a time 'like a wild ass used to the wilderness,'  
 scorning to be turned, their foot had slid in due time;  
 and a crook being thereby made in their lot, their  
 month hath come, wherein they have been caught,  
 Jer. ii. 24. Thus was the prodigal brought to him-  
 self, and obliged to entertain hopes of returning unto  
 his Father, Luke xv. 17. The crook in their lot con-  
 vinces them at length that here is not their rest.  
 Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whenso-  
 ever they lay down their head where they would  
 fainest take rest in the creature, and that they are  
 obliged



obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude, there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way, so it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; for as much as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, 'Arise ye, and depart, this is not your rest.' And it is surely that, which of all means of mortification of the afflictive kind, doth most deaden a real Christian to this life and world.

*Thirdly, Conviction of sin.* As when one walking heedlessly, is suddenly taken ill of a lameness; his going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: So God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherways be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook, mens sin finds them out to their conviction, 'as the thief is ashamed when he is found,' Numb. xxxii. 23. Jer. ii. 26. The which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt, Gen. xlii. 21. 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother,' chap. xliv. 16. 'God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.' The crook in the lot doth usually in its nature or circumstances, so naturally refer to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair dealing, palmed upon him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat

cheat he had seven years at least before put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? Gen. xxvii. 19. How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards, during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adonibezek in another case, Judges i. 7. 'As I have done, so God hath requited me.' In like manner, Rachel dying in child-birth, could hardly evade a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned, Gen. xxx. 1. 'Give me children, or else I die.' Even holy Job read in the crook of his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth many years before. Job xiii. 26. 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'

*Fourthly* Correction, or punishment for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified, Jer. ii. 19. 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.' God may for a time wink at one sin, which afterward he will set a brand of his indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Tho' the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the divine displeasure for it set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over; but for that cause *the sword never departed from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of falsehood and lying: but, as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which clave to him while he lived; and to his posterity after him, 2 Kings v. 27.

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This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the beloved, who yet hath a particular badge of the divine displeasure with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot, Psalm. xcix. 8. 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.'

*Fifthly*, Preventing of sin, Hos. ii. 6. 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths.' The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party: so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take, and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men; but, by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former taking appearance; so the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner after gadding about so much to change his way, returning ashamed, Jer. ii. 36. 37. Thus the Lord crooks one's lot, 'That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man;' and so, 'he keepeth back his soul from the pit,' Job xxxiii. 17. 18. Every one knows what is most pleasing to him, but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too: he is the *only wise God*, Jude 25. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they go not to these excesses, which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to: and they would from their hearts bless God for making, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship  
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of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

*Sixthly*, Discovery of latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to cast up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top and run over, so the crook in the lot raiseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one would hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses as he discovered at the waters of strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan, Ps. cvi. 32. 33. Numb. xx. 13. So much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with becoming cruel to him, Job xxx. 21. So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father, Jer. xx. 14. 15. Or, such a tang of atheism in Asaph, as to pronounce religion a vain thing, Psalm lxxiii. 13. But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, shewed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is noways inconsistent with the divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart, Deut. viii. 2.

*Lastly*, The exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces ly dormant for the time.

Besides,



Besides, there are some graces which, of their own nature, are but occasional in their exercises; as being exercised only upon occasion of certain things, which they have a necessary relation to; such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces, ministering proper occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good; and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that, however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. 'Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth—may be found unto praise,' 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, longings, and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, howsoever by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God, than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long-run, howbeit the persons themselves, often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, 'Let me see thy countenance—thy countenance is comely,' Cant. ii. 14. 'Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,' chap. iv. 9. The steady acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy, is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope, is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the psalmist teacheth, Psal. cxlviii. 11. 12. 'He delighteth

‘delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.’ And indeed the exercise of the graces of his Spirit in his people, is so very precious in his sight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot, as will be a special trial for it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God’s bare word of promise, over the belly of sense; and God giving him a promise, that he would make of him a great nation, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough to do with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and it was declared, That in Isaac only ‘his seed should be called,’ Gen. xxi. 12. ‘Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,’ Numb. xii. 3. And he was intrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience, and by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some one time or other, he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

Now the use of this doctrine is threefold, (1.) For reproof. (2.) For consolation. And, (3.) For exhortation.

*Use 1.* Of reproof. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reprovable.

*First,* The carnal and earthly, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as  
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of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the divine hand upon it to be perceived by just observers: And that challengeth an awful regard, the neglect of which forebodes destruction, Psal. xxviii. 5. 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, thou shalt destroy them, and not build them up.' And herein they are deeply guilty, who, poring upon second causes, and looking no farther than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlooking the first cause, as a dog snarles at the stone, but looks not at the hand that casts it. This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature; so regarding it, as if it could of itself effectuate any thing, while, in the mean time, it is but an instrument in the hand of God, the *rod of his anger*, Isa. x. 5. 'Ordained of him for judgement, established for correction,' Hab. i. 12. O! why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges! The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which, for their gratifying their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, return on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did the *blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu*, Hos. i. 4. And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different; witness Shimei's cursing David, as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the house of Saul, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriah, which he could not deny, 2 Sam. xvi. 7. 8. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at long run, taken up between God and his people; and then their scourgers will find they had but a thankless office, Zech. i. 15. 'I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction,' saith God, in resentment of the heathens crooking the lot of his people. In like manner are they guilty, who impute the crook

in their lot to fortune or their ill-luck, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep men from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the Philistines doubted, they do more impiously determine, saying, in effect, 'It is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened us,' 1 Sam. vi. 9. And, finally, these also, who, in the way of giving up themselves to carnal mirth and sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking to him for remedy in the first case, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life for help in the second place. But as for that course, so frequent and usual in this place among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really be, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most indecent unbecoming course, to be abhorred of all good men, Prov. iii. 11. 'My son despise not the chastening of the Lord.' It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for a while, Isa. xxii. 12. 13. 14. 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning,—and behold joy and gladness,—eating flesh, and drinking wine.— And it was revealed in mine ears, by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die.'

*Secondly,* The unsubmissive, whose hearts like the troubled sea, swell and boil, fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some, 'to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever,' ver. 12. saith of them ver. 16. *These are murmurers, complainers,* namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word there used by the Holy Ghost. For since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's making, this  
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their practice must needs be a fighting against God, and these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against him, whatever face they put upon them. Thus when the Israelites murmured against Moses, Numb. xiv. 2. God charges them with murmuring against himself, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmured against me,' ver. 17. Ah! may not he who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too, without asking our mind, but we must rise up against him on account of the crook made in it! What doth this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor digest what he hath done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit? How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? 'He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?' Job ix. 4.

*Lastly*, The careless and unfruitful, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since he makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, Micah vi. 9. *Hear ye the rod.* And indeed, if one shut not his own eyes, but be willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design thereof to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his heart's rest in God. And the nature and circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard to make a more particular discovery of the design thereof. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of providence in the crook: so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him, by the great Husbandman, in the dispensation are lost. They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the in-

strument thereof: *But none saith, where is God my maker; they look not, they turn not unto God for all that, Job xxxv. 9. 10.*

*Use 2. Of consolation.* It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your father has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcometh his father's rod, knowing that, being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby: and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake his measures to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured by the promise of the Father to Christ's children, Psal. lxxxix 30. 32. 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements,— Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod.' Farthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot, may take comfort in this, let them know that there is no crook in their lot, but may be made straight; for God made it, surely then he can mend it. He himself can make straight what he hath made crooked, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for him to do, 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: that he may set him with princes. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children,' Psal. cxlii. 7. 8. 9. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that he may mend it, and wait on him: and if it be for thy good, that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

*Use*

*Use last.* Of exhortation. Since the crook in the lot is of God's making, then, eyeing the hand of God in yours, be reconciled to it, and submit under it, whatever it is. I say, eyeing the hand of God in it, for otherwise your submission under the crook in your lot, cannot be a Christian submission, acceptable to God, having no reference to him as your party in the matter.

*Object.* 1. But some will say, The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and such a one too as I deserved no such treatment from.

*Ans.* From what hath been already said, it appears; that although the crook in thy lot be indeed immediately from the creature's hand, yet it is mediate from the hand of God; there being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but *the Lord hath done it*. Therefore, without all peradventure, God himself is thy principal party, whoever be the less principal. And albeit, thou hast not deserved thy crook at the hand of the instrument or instruments, which he makes use of for thy correction, thou certainly deserveest it at his hand, and he may make use of what instrument he will in the matter, or may do it immediately by himself, even as seems good in his sight.

*Object.* 2. But the crook in my lot might be quickly evened, if the instrument or instruments thereof pleased; only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it.

*Ans.* If it be so, be sure God's time is not as yet come that that crook should be evened; for if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one's feet; they should 'bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet,' Isa. xlix. 23. Mean while, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece of trial, in which his hand very eminently appears, namely, that men should be signally

injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries, Jer. l. 7. 'All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.' They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet they would take with no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in their devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, surely they were not. Did they look upon themselves as ministers of the divine justice against her? No, they did not. Some indeed would make a question here, How the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the habitation of justice? But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears, that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal the whole matter is set in a clear light. 'All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not: Because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.' These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the prophet; shewing how it came to pass, that the adversaries devoured the Lord's sheep, as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong. The matter lay here; the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice; and, as a just punishment hereof from his hand, they could have no justice at the hand of their adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which hath bowed your lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to, and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart, *Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it*, Jer. x. 17.

And, to move you hereunto, consider, 1. It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor.



refactor. His sovereignty challengeth our submission ; and, it can in no case be meanness of spirit, to submit unto the crook which his hand hath made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that he hath laid on ; but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And his beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouths from our complaining of his making a crook in our lot, who had done us no wrong had he made the whole of it crooked, ‘ Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?’ Job ii. 10, 2. It is an unalterable statute, for the time of this life, that no body shall want a crook in their lot ; for ‘ man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,’ Job v. 7. And those who are designed for heaven, are in a special manner, assured of a crook in theirs, that ‘ in the world they shall have tribulation,’ John xvi. 33. for by means thereof the Lord makes them meet for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of mankind ! ‘ Shall the rock be removed out of his place for thee ?’ And since God makes the crooks in mens lot, according to the different exigences of their cases, you may be sure that yours is necessary for you. 3. A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things the likest to that in hell. For there a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bear nor yet shake off, is wreathed about their necks ; there the Almighty arm draws against them, and they against it ; there they are ever suffering and ever sinning ; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit under the crook in their lot. *Lastly*, Great is the loss by not submitting under it. The crook in the lot rightly improven hath turned to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist

Psalmist from his own experience testifies, Psal. cix. 67. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray: But now have I kept thy word.' There are many now in heaven, who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for Immanuel's land? But, if the crook in thy lot do thee no good, be sure it will not miss of doing thee great damage; it will hugely increase guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation, while it shall for ever cut thee to the heart, to think of the pains taken on thee, by means of the crook in the lot, to wean thee from the world, and bring thee to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it 'Lest—thou mourn at the last,—and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?' Prov. v. 10, 11, 12.

DOCT. II. What God sees meet to mar, we will not be able to mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we will not be able to even.

We shall, I. Shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

II. We shall consider mens attempting to mend, or even that crook in their lot.

III. In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend, or even the crook in our lot.

IV. Render some reasons of the point.

I. As to the first head; namely, Shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

*First*, God keeps the choice of every one's crook to himself; and therein he exerts his sovereignty, Mat. xx. 15. It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden: But, as the potter makes, of the same clay, one vessel for one use, another for another use, so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to his own will and pleasure, Psal. cxxxv. 6. 'Whatsoever  
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‘ the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, &c.

*Secondly*, He sees and observes the bias of every one’s will and inclination how it lies, and wherein it especially bends away from himself, and consequently wherein it needs the special bow; so he did in that man’s case, Mark x. 21. ‘ One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor,’ &c. Observe the bent of his heart to his great possessions. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one’s case is most apt to be his rival, that so he may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

*Thirdly*, By the conduct of his providence, or a touch of his hand, he gives that part of one’s lot a bow the contrary way; so that henceforth it lies quite contrary to that bias of the party’s will, Ezek. xxiv. 25. And here the trial is made, the bent of the will lying one way, and that part of one’s lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts with it.

*Lastly*, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while he sees meet, for longer or shorter time, just according to his own holy ends he designs it for, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Hos. v. 15. By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider mens attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way; so it imports three things:

*First*, A certain uneasiness under the crook in the lot; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit be tamed and subdued, Jer. xxxi. 18. ‘ Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,’ &c. And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one’s spirit that God lays  
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it on; for which cause it is declared to be a good thing to bear it, Lam. iii. 27. that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

*Secondly,* A strong desire to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from every thing that is burdensome or cross to it; and if that desire be kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and be not too peremptory, it is not sinful, Matth. xxvi. 39. *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, &c.* Hence so many accepted prayers of the people of God, for removal of the crook in their lot.

*Lastly,* An earnest use of means for that end. This natively follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross, which is his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used be lawful, and not relied upon, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III. In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot?

*Negatively,* It is not to be understood, as if the case were absolutely hopeless, and that there is no remedy for the crook in the lot. For there is no case so desperate but God may right it, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* When the crook has continued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight, as in Job's case. But,

*Positively,* We will never be able to mend it by ourselves; if the Lord himself take it not in hand to remove it, it will stand before us immovable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in it-  
self



self a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things :

1. It will never do by the mere force of our hand, 1 Sam. ii. 9.—*For by strength shall no man prevail.* The most vigorous endeavours we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of his hand; so that all endeavours that way, without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but plowing on the rock, Psalm cxxvii. 1. 2.

2. The use of all allowable means, for it will be successless unless the Lord bless them for that end, Lam. iii. 37. 'Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?' As one may eat and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in his lot, and yet prevail nothing; for nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do, Eccl. ix.

11.—'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, &c.

3. It will never do in our time, but in God's time, which seldom is so early as ours, John vii. 6.—*My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.* Hence that crook remains sometimes immoveable, as if it were kept by an invisible hand; and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God's time is come for evening it.

#### IV. Reasons of the point.

1<sup>st</sup>, Because of the absolute dependence we have upon God, Acts xvii. 28. As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without him can do nothing great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependence.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because his will is irresistible, Isa. xlvi. 10. *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,* When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done. When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature

creature draw, Job ix. 4. — *Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?*

*Inference 1.* There is a necessity of yielding and submitting under the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot straight which he hath made crooked.

2. The evening of the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a cheat we put on ourselves, and will not last, but like a stick by main force made straight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

*Lastly,* The only habile way of getting the crook evened, is to apply to God for it.

*Exhortation 1.* Let us then apply to God for removing any crook in our lot, that in the settled order of things may be removed. Men cannot cease to desire the removal of a crook, more than that of a thorn in the flesh: but, since we are not able to mend what God sees meet to mar, it is evident we are to apply to him that made it to amend it, and not take the evening of it in our own hand.

*Motive 1.* All our attempts for its removal will, without him, be vain and fruitless, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Let us be as resolute as we will to have it evened, if God say it not, we will labour in vain, Lam. iii. 37. However fair the means we use bid for it; they will be ineffectual if he command not the blessing, Eccl. ix. 11.

2. Such attempts will readily make it worse. Nothing is more ordinary, than for a proud spirit, striving with the crook, to make it more crooked, Eccl. x. 8. 9. — ‘Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. ver 9. Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith, &c.’ This is evident in the case of the murmurers in the wilderness. It naturally comes to be so; because, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from it; and moreover God is provoked to wreathe the yoke the faster about

about one's neck, that he will by no means let it sit easy on him.

3. There is no crook but what may be remedied by him, and made perfectly straight, Psalm cxlvi. 8.

— 'The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down, &c. He can raise the oldest sit-fast, concerning which there remains no hope with us, Rom. iv. 17.

— 'Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were.' It is his prerogative to do wonders; to begin a work, where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection, Gen. xviii. 14.

4. He loves to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ him that way, Psal. l. 15. — 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, &c.' He makes them for that very end that he may bring us to him on that errand, and may manifest his power and goodness in evening of them, Hosea v. 15. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying his glorious perfections, which otherways would be wanting, Exodus xv. 11.

5. A crook thus got evened is a double mercy. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal: these are sapless mercies, and short-liv'd, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. Hosea xiii. 11. Fruits thus too hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to the gracious soul. But, O the sweet of the evening of a crook got by a humble application to, and waiting on the Lord! It has the stamp and superscription of divine favour upon it, which makes it bulky and valuable, Gen. xxxiii. 10. —

'For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, &c. Cha. xxi. 6.

6. God has signalized his favour to his dearest children, in making and mending notable crooks in

their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot, Heb. xii. 6. But then they make way for the richest experiences in the removal of them upon their application to him. This is clear from the case of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Which of the patriarchs had so great crooks as they? but which of them, on the other hand, had so signal tokens of the divine favour? The greatest of men, as Samson and the Baptist, have been born of women, naturally barren; so do the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised thereby.

*Lastly*, It is the shortest and surest way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey, Mark v. 36. — Our faithless out-of-the-way attempts to even the crook, are our fool's haste, that is no speed; as in the case of Abraham's going in to Hagar. God is the first mover, who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, the which without him will remain immoveable, Hosea ii. 21, 22.

*Object. 1.* 'But it is needless, for I see, that tho' the crook in my lot may mend, yet it will never mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain, it is not to be removed, it is hopeless.'

*Ans.* That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct, Psalm cxvi. 1 r. Abraham had as much to say for the hopefulness of his crook, but he applies to God in faith for the mending of it, Rom. iv. 19. 20. Sarah had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked, Gen. xviii. 13. 14. Nothing can make it needless in such a case to apply to God.

*Object. 2.* 'But I have applied to him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.' *Ans.* Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but



but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners, And whoſo will hang on will certainly come ſpeed at long-run, Luke xviii. 7. 8. 31. 'And ſhall not ' God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night ' unto him, though he bear long with them? verſe ' 8. I tell you that he will avenge them ſpeedily.' Sometimes indeed folks grow peſtiſh, in the caſe of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out in their prayers, in a courſe of deſpondency, while it yet continues uneaſy to them; but, if God mind to even it in mercy, he will oblige them to take it in again unto them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. 'I will yet for this ' be inquired of by the houſe of Iſrael, to do it for ' them, &c. If the removal come, while it is dropt, there will be little ſoyſon in it; though it were never to be removed while we live, that ſhould not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many prayers not to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once, Rom. vii. 24.

*Directions for right managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.*

1. Pray for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And pray in faith, believing that, for the ſake of Jeſus, you ſhall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the other life, Matt. xxi. 22. They will not be diſappointed that get the ſong of Moſes and of the Lamb, Rev. xv. 3. And in ſome caſes of that nature extraordinary prayer, with faſting, is very expedient, Matth. xvii. 21.

2. Humble yourſelves under it, as the yoke which the ſovereign hand has laid on you, Micah vii. 9. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, becauſe ' I have ſinned againſt him,' &c. Juſtify God, condemn yourſelves, kiſs the rod, and go quietly under it: this is the moſt feaſible way to get rid of it,

James iv. 10. When the bullock is broken and tamed, as accustomed to the yoke, then it is taken off, the end being obtained, Psalm x. 17.——'Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.'

*Lastly*, Wait on patiently till the hand that made it mend it, Psal. xxvii. 14. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would: 'but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James i. 4. Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; his time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it, Isaiah lx. 22. *I the Lord will hasten it in his time*: waiting on him, you will not be disappointed.——*For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me*, Isaiah xlix. 23.

*Exhortation 2.* What crook there is, that, in the settled order of things, cannot be got removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of the saints, viz. indwelling-sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here, he can certainly balance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In both cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things I would have you to keep in view, and aim at here.

1. To take God in Christ, for, and instead of that thing, the withholding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot, Psal. cxlii. 4. 5. There is never a crook God makes in our lot, but it is in effect heaven's offer of a blest exchange to us, such as Mark x. 21. 'Sell whatsoever thou hast,——and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' In managing of which exchange, God first puts out his hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us: and it is expected we put out our hand next, and

and take some heavenly thing from him in the stead of it, and particularly, his Christ. Wherefore has God emptied his left hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch forth your right hand to a God in Christ, take him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, Mat xiii. 45. 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: ver. 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' Do this, and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the streams running as full from him as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to hang on for that from God which is denied us from the creature. 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up,' Psal. xxvii. 10. This is a most rational expectation: for it is certain there is no good in the creature but what is from God; therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God, the fountain. And, O! but it is a welcome plea, to come to God and say, Now, Lord, thou hast taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from thyself.

3. The spiritual fruits of the crook in the lot, Heb. xii. 11. We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously: See if by means of the crook, we can reach more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self-denial, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 10. So, while we lose at one hand, we will gain at another.

4. Grace to carry us up under the crook, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 'For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.' Ver. 9. 'And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee.' Whether a man be faint and have a light burden, or be refreshed and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all a case, the latter can go as easy under his burden, as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial, is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook be not evened, we are even hands with it.

*Lastly*, The keeping in our eye the eternal rest and weight of glory in the other world, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. 'For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen.' This will balance the crook in your lot, be it what it will; while they who have no well-grounded hope of salvation, will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counter-balance it; yet the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and trouble met with here.

*Exhortation 3.* Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear and carry under the crook in our lot, while God sees meet to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear Christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it,

1. Patiently, without firing, and fretting, or murmuring, James v. 7. Psal. xxxvii. 7. Though we lose our comfort in the creature, through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves, Luke xxi. 19. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty cold-fire fire to warm at; but impatience under it scatters it, so as to set the house on fire about us, and exposeth us, Prov. xxv. 28. 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.'

2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking under discouragement—nor faint when thou art rebuked

of



‘ of him,’ Heb. xii. 5. Satan’s work is by the crook, either to bend or break people’s spirits, and oftentimes by bending to break them: Our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lyes not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable, Hab. iii. 17, 18. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way with a holy contempt and regardlessness of the hardships; Job. xvii. 29. ‘ The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.’

*Quest.* When is one to be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot?

*Ans.* When it prevails so far as to unfit for the duties, either of our particular or Christian calling, we may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls on us to manage, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It is recorded in the commendation of Abraham, Gen. xxiii. 3, 4. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, 1 Pet. iii. 7.—‘ that your prayers be not hindered, (*Greek*, cut off, or up, like a tree from the roots,)’ or making one quite hopeless in them, Mal. ii. 13.

*Lastly*, Profitably, so as we may gain some advantage thereby, Psal. cxix. 71. ‘ It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. There is an advantage to be made thereby, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And it is certainly an ill-managed crook in our lot when we get not some spiritual good of it, Heb. xi. 11. the crook is a kind of spiritual medicine; and, as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, but in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste, and its gripings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it wared, that we are not bettered by, Isa. xxvii. 9. ‘ By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.’

Motives

Motives to press this exhortation. Consider,

1. There will be no evening of it while God sees meet to continue it. Let us carry under it as we will, and make what fallies we please in the case, it will continue immoveable, as fixed with bands of iron and brass, Job xxiii. 13. 'But he is of one mind, and 'who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even 'that he doth.' Ver. 14. 'For he performeth the 'thing that is appointed for me: and many such 'things are with him.' Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should with a Christian resignation.

2. An aukward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our neck, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us, Jer. xxxi. 18. How often are we in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it? The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded, and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an overweight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear.

3. The crook in thy lot is the special trial God has chosen for thee to take thy measure by, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. It is God's fire, whereby he tries what metal men are of; heaven's touchstone for discovering of true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear, and go thro' several trials, which the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because, by no means they can bear that, Mark x. 21, 22. Think then with thyself under it. Now here the trial of my state turns, I must by this be either proved sincere or a hypocrite; for, 1. Can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ, put a blank in his hand, Acts ix. 6. Psal. xlviii. 4. And does he not tell us, that  
without

without that disposition we are not his disciples, Luke xiv. 26. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Perhaps you find you can submit to any thing but that; but will that but mar all? Mark x. 21. Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ, with a reserve or exception of one thing, wherein they behoved to be their own lords?

*Quest.* Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily pre-required to our believing? And if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers?

*Ans.* No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, whereby the soul is brought to believe in him. Hereby the soul sees him an able Saviour, so trusts on him for salvation; the rightful Lord, and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to him, Mat. xiii. 45, 46. The soul taking him for a Saviour, takes him also for a Head and Ruler. It is Christ's giving himself to us, and our receiving him, that causes us quit other things to and for him; as it is the light dispels the darkness.

*Case,* Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to him in that point.

*Ans.* That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit it, and when the new man of grace is submitting it, the old man will still be reclaiming, Gal. v. 17. 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' But are ye sincerely desirous, and habitually aiming to submit it? Do ye, from the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourselves, that ye cannot submit it? This

is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel, Rom. vii. 17.—20. 2 Cor. viii. 12. If ye had your choice, would you rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart's desire, Rom. vii. 22. 23. And do ye not sincerely endeavour to submit it over the belly of the reluctancy of flesh, Gal. v. 17.

2. Where is the Christian self-denial, and taking up of the cross, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of his disciples, Matth. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross: but while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied of any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees meet especially to be denied in, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favour of self.

3. Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians without conformity to Christ. 'He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked,' 1 John ii. 6. There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but he submitted to it, Phil. ii. 8. 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Rom. xv. 3. 'For even Christ pleased not himself,' &c. And so must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed, Matth. xi. 29. 2 Tim. ii. 11. 12.

4. How will we prove ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, *Our Father, — Thy will be done on earth*, &c. Mat. vi. Nay, the language of that practice is, we must have our own will, and God's will cannot satisfy us.

*Motive* 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long, 1 Cor. vii. 31. What though the work be sore, it may be the better comported with, that it will not be longsome: a few days or years at farthest will put



put an end to it, and take off your trials. Do not say, I will never be eased of it; for if ye be not eased before, ye will be eased of it at death, come in the room of it after what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us to set ourselves to carry rightly under our crook while it lasteth.

5. If ye would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, ye would find it easier than ye imagine, Mat. xi. 29. 30. 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls.' Ver. 30. 'For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose; than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should ply with the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable: as long as ye believe that, be sure ye will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any but what may be so borne of them acceptably, tho' not sinlessly and perfectly, Mat. xi. 30. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. iv. 13. and, being by faith fetched, it will certainly come, Psal. xxviii. 7.

6. If ye carry Christianly under your lot here, ye will not lose your labour, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 58. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endureth on this very ground, Jam. i. 12. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' Heaven is the place into which the approven, upon the trial of the crook, are received, Rev. vii. 14. 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' When ye come there no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will ye have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and screw up your joy.

7. If

7. If you do not carry Christianly under it, ye will lose your souls in the other world, Jude 15. 16. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them for ever. If they will not submit to his yoke here, and go quietly under it, he will wreathe his yoke about their neck for ever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed, Job ix. 4.

*Lastly*, Whatever crook is in the lot of any, it is very likely there is a public crook abiding the generation, that will be more trying. This is a day of sinning, beyond the days of our fathers, a day wherein God is making great crooks in the lot of the dearest to himself; but these seem to presage such a general public crook to be abiding the generation, as will make our own private ones of very little weight, 1 Pet. iv. 17. 18. Therefore set ybourselves to carry rightly under the crook in your lot.

If you ask what way one may reach that, for direction we propose,

DOCT. III. The considering the crook in the lot, as the word of God, is a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under it.

I. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God, we take it up in these five things.

*First*, An enquiry into the spring whence it riseth, Gen. xxv. 22. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and enquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves; and to ascribe it to fortune, is to ascribe it to nothing; it is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or other for us, Job v. 6. And we are to notice the hand from whence it comes.

*Secondly*, A perceiving of the hand of God in it. Whatever hand any creature hath therein, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme Manager's agency therein, Job i. 21. Without this we make a God of  
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the creature instrumental in the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, Rom. xi. 36. and bring ourselves under that doom, Psal. xxviii. 5. 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them, up.'

*Thirdly,* A representing it to ourselves as the work of God, which he hath wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from whence a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature, ascribing it unto God, as if no other hand were in it; his being always the principal therein. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,* 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one would to the ax, fixing his eye on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into consideration.

*1st,* The decree of God purposing that crook for us from eternity; *for he worketh all things by the counsel of his own will,* Eph. i. 11. the sealed book in which are written all the black lines that make the crook. Whatever valley of darkness, grief and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immoveable divine purposes, Zech. vi. 1. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no further than the event goes in our sight and feeling; for so far the book is opened for us to look into.

*2dly,* The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time, Amos iii. 6. There is nothing can befall us without him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, he is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing they would all stop; though he is still infinitely pure in his a-  
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gency, however impure they be in theirs, Job considered both these, chap. xxiii. 14.

*Fourthly*, A continuing in the thought of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating and leisurely viewing of it as his work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

1<sup>st</sup>, Habitually impressed with this consideration; as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations, besides this, that we must entertain, so that we cannot always have it expressly in our mind: but we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, whereby it may slip into our minds, as occasion requires, expressly.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy; when the yoke begins to gall the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes in on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as the proper remedy; the oftener it is used, it will more easily come to hand, and also be the more effectual.

*Lastly*, A considering it for the end for which it is proposed to us, *viz.* to bring a dutiful carriage under it. Mens corruption will cause them to enter on this consideration: and as is the principle, so will the end and effect of it be corrupt, 2 Kings vi. 33. But we must enter on, and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How it is to be understood to be a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under the crook.

1. *Negatively*, Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But,

2. *Positively*, As it is used in faith, in the faith of the gospel: that is to say, A sinner's bare considering



ing the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to him, will never be a way to carry rightly under it: but having believed in Jesus Christ, and so taking God for his God, the considering the crook as the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behaviour. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such law-considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine, that, by the mere force of them they may gain the point. And many preachers too, who, forgetting Christ and the gospel, pretend by the force of reason to make men Christians: the eyes of both being held, that they do not see the corruption of mens nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason; all that they are sensible of being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,

*First*, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam? This is to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with them that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, whereby he might have by the force of moral considerations, brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? 2 Cor. iii. 5. Whatever force be in them to a soul endued with spiritual life, what force is in them to raise the dead, such as we are? Eph. ii. 1.

*Secondly*, The scripture is very plain on this head, shewing the indispensable necessity of faith. Heb. xi. And that such as unites to Christ, John xv. 5. *Without me, i. e. separate from me, ye can do nothing*, no not with all the moral considerations ye can use. How were the ten commands given on mount Sinai? not bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the gospel, to be believed in the first place, *I am the Lord thy God, &c.* And so Solomon, whom many do regard rather

as a moral philosopher, than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes, and take these precepts without it? that is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved him more, we would see him more in every page, and in every command, receiving the law at his mouth.

*Thirdly*, Do but consider what it is to carry rightly under the crook in the lot, what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the will of God, must be in it; what love to God it must proceed from; how regard to his glory must influence it as the chief end thereof; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith aforementioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance: but still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. O what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, that think they can for a moment empty them of the creature, farther than they can fill them with a God, as their God, in its room and stead! No doubt man may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behaviour under the crook, externally right, such as many Pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

*Object*. Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration. *Ans*. Yea, indeed it is so, as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends: and that amounts to no more, than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living, that have the use of their limbs: and therefore, that ye may improve it, set yourselves to believe in the first place.

III. I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring

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one to carry rightly under it. This will appear, if we consider these four things.

1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on these things about the crook, which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the baulking of our will and wishes the satisfaction we would have in the matter's going according to our mind, the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, &c. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God, would be a cure by way of diversion, 2 Sam. vi. 9. 10. And such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing the good effect. Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason; yet it is carried on, not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way, Eph. v. 14. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for it, moving to carry Christianly under our crook.

3. It hath a divine appointment on it for that end, which is to be believed, Proverbs iii. 6. So the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity, Acts xvii. 28. What makes any thing a means fit for the end, is a word of divine appointment, Matth. iv. 4. To use any thing then for an end without the faith of this, is to make a God of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God, according to that word of appointment, 1 Timothy iv. 4. 5. And every thing is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

*Lastly*, The Spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it in them that believe, and look to him for it, inasmuch as it is a mean of his own appointment. Papists, Legalists, and all superstitious persons,

persons, devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same: but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana and Pharpar, they want a word of divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are none of his own tools, but devised of their hearts. And since the means of divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

*Use.* Then take this direction for your carrying right under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices.

1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable, Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3. The discerning of a Father's hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God under your crook, Pf. cxliii. 4. (2.) In all your encounters with it resolutely to believe and claim your interest in him, 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

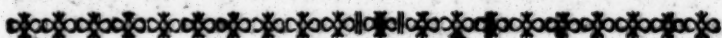
2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the divine relations to you, and the divine attributes. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your Father, elder Brother, Head, Husband, &c. who therefore surely consults your good. Consider his holiness and justice, shewing he wrongs you not; his mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; his sovereignty, that may silence you; his infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a work of his it is, how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance; a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies; a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin ye would be otherways apt to run into; a trying work,



work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruptions; a weaning work, to wean you from the world, and fit you for heaven.

*Lastly*, In all your considerations of it in this manner look upward for his Spirit, to render them effectual, 1 Cor. iii. 6. Thus may ye carry Christianly under it, till God even it either here or in heaven.



PROVERBS xvi. 19.

*Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

**C**OULD men once be brought to believe, that it is better to have their minds brought to ply with the crook in their lot, than to force even the crook to their mind, they would then be in a fair way to bring their matters in that case to a good account. Hear then the divine decision in that case, *Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.* In which words,

*First*, There is a comparison instituted, and that between two parties, and two points, wherein they vastly differ,

1<sup>st</sup>, The parties are the lowly and the proud, who differ like heaven and the centre of the earth; the proud are ay climbing up and soaring aloft; the lowly are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God: Let us view them more particularly as the text represents them.

(1.) On the one hand is the lowly. Here there is a line reading and a marginal, both from the Holy Spirit, and they differ only in a letter, the former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction

affliction laid on them, whereby their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones, who are low in their spirit, as well as their condition, so have their minds brought down to their lot. Both together making the character of this lowly party.

(2.) On the other hand is the proud, the gay, and high-minded ones. It is supposed here that they are crossed too, and have crooks in their lot; for dividing the spoil is the consequent of a victory, and a victory presupposes a battle.

2dly, The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, viz. being of a humble spirit, and dividing the spoil.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometimes get their condition changed, may be raised up on high, and divide the spoil, as Hannah, Job, &c. The proud may be sometimes thrown down and crushed, as Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. But that is not the question, Whether it is better to be raised up with the lowly, or thrown down with the proud? There would be no difficulty in determining that: But the question is, Whether it is better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted humble ones, or to divide the spoil, and get one's will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts, that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared, and set one against another are these,

(1.) On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones, (Heb.) to be of a low spirit, for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state; so the point here proposed is to be with or in the state of afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot, the lowness of the spirit, balancing the lowness of one's condition.

(2.) On the other hand, to divide the spoil with the proud. The point here proposed is, to be with or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those, who, taking themselves

themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

2. The decision made, wherein the former is preferred to the latter, *Better it is, &c.* If these two parties were set before us, it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those, who, being of a proud and high-bended spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

DOCT. There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit lowered and brought down to their lot, whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will and carrying all to their mind.

I. We shall consider the generation of the lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit brought down to their lot. And we shall,

1<sup>st</sup>, Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, for as bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the scripture elsewhere makes mention of them, as Psal. ix. 16. and x. 12. Matth. v. 3. with Luke vi. 20. Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there; nor in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In this world they must then be, where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as he was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the head of that generation whom they all copy after, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*, Matth. xi. 29. And for his honour, and the honour of his cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands, Rom. viii. 29. *Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* His image lies in these two, suffering and holiness, whereof lowliness is a chief part.

4. They

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes that there is another generation, (Prov. xxx. 13. *Their eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up*) quite opposite to them; and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high-bended spirit keeps on the bend in spite of lowering circumstances.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of divine grace can bring down men's minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God, 2 Cor. x. 4. 5. Men may put on a face of submission to a low and crossed lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it in vain to strive: but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all, Acts xiv. 22. and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding, Luke xiv. 26. yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit however is thereby humbled, and brought down to their lot, Psal. cxxxii. 2. 'Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child.' Phil. iv. 11. 12. 'For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.'

*Lastly*, A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favourable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we would find none in this world: but those who



who are sincerely aiming and endeavouring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes they are blown aside, returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation, 2 Cor. viii. 12. James v. 11.

II. We shall enter into the particulars of their character. There are three things which together make up their character.

*First*, Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous are a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two :

1<sup>st</sup>, There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or other, oftentimes upon them, Psal. lxxiii. 14. If there be silence in heaven, it is but for half an hour, Rev. viii. 1. God is frequently visiting them, as a master doth his scholars, and a physician his patients, whereas others are in a sort overlooked by him, Rev. iii. 19. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, Psal. cxxix. 1. 2. 3. God sees it good for them, Lam. iii. 27. 28.

2<sup>dly</sup>, There is a particular yoke of affliction, which God has chosen for them, that hangs about them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them, Luke ix. 23. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be changed, but that is a weight that still hangs about them, bowing them down.

*Secondly*, Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has, by his grace, brought down from their natural height. And thus,

1<sup>st</sup>, They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are, 2 Cor. xii. 11.; what they can do; 2 Cor. iii. 5. what they are worth, Gen. xxxii. 10. and what they deserve Lam. iii. 22. Viewing themselves in the glass of the divine law and perfections, they see themselves

themselves a mass of imperfection and sinfulness, Job xlii. 5. 6.

2dly, They think highly and honourably of God, Psal. cxliv. 3. They are taught by the Spirit what God is, and so entertain elevated thoughts of him, They consider him as the Sovereign of the world, his perfections as infinite, his work as perfect, they look on him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well, trusting his wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see, Heb. xi. 8.

3dly, They think favourably of others, as far as in justice they may, Phil. ii. 3. Though they cannot hinder themselves to see their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving thereof, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4thly, They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and his will, Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. Pride sets a man up against God, lowliness brings him back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, *Thy will be done on earth*, &c. They seek no more the command, but are content that God himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage for them, Psal. xlvii. 4.

5thly, They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things, Psalm cxxxi. 1. Lowliness levels the towering imaginations, which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping stones to the throne of his glory, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

Lastly, They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them, Gen. xxxii. 30. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possess of, and fixeth the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making

one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark on the good things they have possessed, or yet do, Job ii. 10.

*Thirdly*, A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being, through grace, brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things.

*1st*, They submit to it as just, Mic. vii. 9. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, they have their complaints on themselves; their hearts rise not up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouths against the heavens. They justify God and condemn themselves, reverencing his holiness and spotless righteousness in his proceedings against them.

*2dly*, They go quietly under it as tolerable, Lam. iii. 25.—29. 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him, he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.' While the unsubdued spirit rageth under the yoke as a bullock unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord's mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without these overweights upon it that turbulent passions add thereunto; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

*3dly*, They are satisfied in it, as drawing their comfort from another air than their outward condition,

even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean upon. 'Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the Lord,' Hab. iii. 17. 18. Thus did David in the day of his distress, 'he encouraged himself in the Lord his God,' 1 Sam. xxx. 6. It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the lot, when one is damped and sunk under the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point whereon their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes mens comforts wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a complacency in it, as that which is fit and good for them, Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them sore; they rationally think with themselves that it is good and best for them; so these lowly souls consider their afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them, yea best for them for the time, since it is ministered by their heavenly Father; and so they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot.

The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness in his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul's love may run towards himself; how he pulls off and holds off the man's burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditely the way to heaven.

*Lastly*, They rest in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it, sees meet to bring them out with his good will, Isa. xxviii. 16. Though an unsubdued spirit's time for deliverance is always ready, a humble soul will be afraid of being taken out of his afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for a moving for a change, till the heaven's



ven's moving bring it about : so this hinders not prayer, and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience and resignation, 2 Sam. xv. 25. 26.

II. We shall consider the generation of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

*First*, Crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by over-ruling providence, and let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For consider,

1<sup>st</sup>, The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, have made it impossible to get through the world, but men must meet with what will ruffle them, Eccl. i. 14. Sin has turned the world from a paradise to a thicket, there is no getting through without being scratcht. As the midges in the summer will fly about these walking abroad in a goodly attire, as well as about those in sordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none, Esth. v. 13. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn-hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things : so none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them ; as appears from,

*Secondly*, Reigning pride in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation; they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature sets them ; hence they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humours of pride and passion ; hence, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they

cannot have any more. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things:

1<sup>st</sup>, They have an over-value for themselves; and so the proud mind says, The man should not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, *Exod. v. 2. Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* Hence a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of Christ's precepts or providence. The first error is in the understanding, whence Solomon ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble. Men are bigger in their own conceit, than they are indeed: therefore God, suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2<sup>dly</sup>, They have an unmortified self-will, arising from that over-value for themselves, and it says he will not stoop, *Exod. v. 2.* The question betwixt heaven and us is, Whether God's will or our own must carry it? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says in his providence, our will must yield to his: but that it will not do, till the iron sinew in it be broken, *Rom. vi. 7. Ista. xlviii. 4.*

3<sup>dly</sup>, They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with the self-will, and they say, He shall not stoop, *Rom. vii. 8. 9.* And so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without the man, *James iv. 1.*

1. A holy God crosses the self-will of the proud creatures by his providence, over-ruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by his own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, *Gen. iv. 4. 5.* sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard, *1 Kings xxi. 4.*

2. The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controuled, rises up against it,

It, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross, even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind: this is the cause of this unholy war, in which,

1. There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack on heaven itself, *viz.* discontent, impatience, murmuring, fretting, and the like. 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3. These fire the breast, fall the countenance, Gen. iv. 5. let off sometimes a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, Jude, ver. 16. and sometimes of blasphemies, 2 Kings vi. 33.—

2. There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, *viz.* anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. Prov. xxvii. 4. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, Luke xxi. 19. fill the heart with a boiling heat, Psal. xxxix. 3. the mouth with clamour and evil-speaking, Eph. iv. 31. and threatenings are breathed out. Acts ix. 1. and sometimes set the hands on work, which has a most heavy event, Mat. v. 21. 22. as in the case of Ahab against Naboth.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oftentimes they lose the day, and the cross remains immoveable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin, Exod. xv. 9. 10. But that is not the case in the text. We are to consider them as,

III. Getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks;

1. Holy providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind, Gen. vi. 3. God sees it meet to let the struggle with him fall, for it prevails not to his good, Isaiah i. 5. So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at, 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone,' Hosea iv. 17.

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigour, Psalm lxxviii. 30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* God, in the method of his covenant, sometimes gives his people their will, and sets them where they would be; but then, in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children, Psalm x. 17. But here the lust remains rampant; the proud seek meat for it, and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off, Psalm lxxviii. 29. They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it, wrestled and fought against, till it is brought up to their mind; So the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

*Lastly,* The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one is when he is dividing the spoil, 1 Kings xxi. 18 19.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to confirm the doctrine or the decision of the text. That the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters go to will and wish, according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

I. Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatsoever this preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in the world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better; as gold in a dunghill is more excellent than lead in a cabinet. For,

1. Humility is a piece of the image of God. Pride is the master-piece of the image of the devil. Let us view him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold him meek and lowly in heart, Matth. xi. 29. None more afflicted, yet his spi-  
rit



rit perfectly brought down to his lot. Isa. liii. 7. 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.' That is a shining piece of the divine image: for though God cannot be low in respect of his state and condition, yet he is of infinite condescension, Isa. lvii. 15. None bears as he, Rom. ii. 4. nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to his will, which is proposed to us for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ, 'For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds, Heb. xii. 3.

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Will we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point; for though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell; and as it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit, so his spirit will never come down to his lot: and therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Hence, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now is it not better to be like God, than like the devil? Like him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can any thing possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? *Then better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, &c.*

2. Humility and lowliness of spirit qualify us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy, 1 Peter v. 5. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with Heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss, Psal. xxx. 3. If we have that, nothing can make us miserable, Rom. viii. 31. *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Now,

Now, who are they whom God is for, but the humble and lowly? they who being in Christ are so made like him. He blesses them, and declares them the heirs to the crown of glory, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Matth. v. 3. He will look to them be their condition never so low, while he overlooks others, Isa. lxvi. 2. He will have respect to them, however they be despised: 'Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off,' Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell, Isa. lvii. 15. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they ly now, Isa. xl. 4.

Whom is he against? Whom does he resist? The proud. Them he curseth, Jer. xvii. 5. and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God's rival; he makes himself his own God, and would have those about him make him theirs too: he rages, he blusters if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down, Isa. xl. 4. Psalm xviii. 27.

Now, is it not better to be qualified for communion with God, than to have him engaged against us at any rate?

3. Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil, Isa. lvii. 15. 1 Tim. iii. 6. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction—and *be clothed with humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5. 6. That is our becoming garment. The humble publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud, as 1 Thess. ii. 16. *Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*. They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now, duty is ay better than sin at any rate.

II. They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot, have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up

to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble and vexation. Consider here, that on the one hand,

1. Quiet of mind, and ease within, is a great blessing upon which the comfort of life depends. Nothing without this can make one's life happy, Dan. v. 6. And where this is maintained, nothing can make it miserable, John xvi. 33: This being secured in God, there is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, Psalm xlvi. 2, 3, 4. Like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves.

2. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquillity. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world riseth from the disagreement of our mind therewith; let the mind be brought to the lot, and the whole tumult is instantly hushed; if it be kept in that disposition, then the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it, Col. iii. 15.—'And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called.'

On the other hand, consider,

1. What disquiet of mind the proud do suffer e're they can get their lot brought up to their mind. 'They have taught their tongues to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity,' Jer. ix. 5. James iv. 2. 'Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.'—What arrows of grief go through their heart? what torture of anxiety, fretting and vexation must they endure? what contrary passions do fight within them? and what fallies of passions do they make? what uneasiness was Haman in, before he could carry the point of the revenge against Mordecai, obtaining the king's decree?

2. When the thing is got to their mind, it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment thereof brings not so much satisfaction and pleasure, as the want of it gave pain. This was evident in Rachel's case, as to the having of children, and in that case, Psalm lxxviii. 30,

31. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mays the favour they expected to find in it. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence, e're it is ripe, will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night, Exodus xvi. 20.

3. They have but an unsure grip of it; it doth not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again, 'I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath,' Hosea xiii. 11. having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So Haman obtained the decree; but e're the day of execution came he was gone.

III. They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot, do gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind, Prov. xvi. 32. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' This will appear if we consider,

1. The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. The life is more than meat. The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniencies that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what betters only his condition. Who doubts, but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a course bed to a fine one; but the sickness still remaining, the other lies still in the course bed, but the sickness is removed, that the case of the latter is preferable? So, &c.

2. The subduing of our own passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: for then we are masters of ourselves, according to that, Luke xxi. 19. Whereas, in the other case, we are still slaves to the worst of masters, Rom. vi. 16. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will, in the other we lye exposed to thousands of dangers,  
Prov.



Prov. 25. 28. 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

*Lastly*, When both shall come to be judged, it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works, in bringing their spirit to their lot; the other, the tale of their ill works, in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, whose eyes every internal action is a work, good or bad, to be reckoned for, Rom. ii. 16.

An afflicted lot is painful, but where it is well managed, it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the spirit in a Christian, which otherways would ly dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in him for his help, but they will be recorded in heaven's register as good works, Mal. iii. 16. And these are occasioned by affliction.

On the other hand, there is never a rising of the proud heart against the lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of such be multiplied by the war in which the spoil is divided.

*Use 1.* Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folk to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance, Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12. 'Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own heart's lust? and they walked in their own counsels.' It may be pleasantest and gratefulest for the time, but it is not the safest. Let not people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by strong hand; let them not triumph on such victory: the after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party, whose lot is kept low, is so far from being a loser, that he is a gainer thereby, if his spirit is brought down to it. And if

he

he will see his case in the light of God's unerring word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way, the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, Psalm lxxviii. 29. 30, 31. In the other, the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines his own, Lam. lji. 27.

3. It is better to yield to providence than to fight it out though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honourably; for what honour can there be in a creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? and we act most wisely; for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on Heaven's side in the war, 1 Sam. ii. 9. 'For by strength shall no man prevail.'

*Lastly*, It is of far greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to minister drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, whereby their thirst may be carried off.

*Use 2.* As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your bent be rather to have your spirit humbled and brought down, than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that ye may use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but only that you be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and ply, than to get the crook in your lot evened.

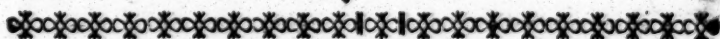
*Motive 1.* It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross, than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling for the profit of our souls, to purify them, and bring them in to a state of health and cure.

2. The

2. The humbling of the spirit will have mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbed spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, Mat. xi. 30. and in due time carry it clearly off, 1 Pet. v. 6. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbed, though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

*Lastly*, Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed e'er the spirit is humbled; that is, to have the means of cure pulled away, and blocked up from us, while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials e'er we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our physician as hopeless, Isa. i. 5. Hos. iv. 17.

For direction, believing the gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness, so will ye be humbled under the mighty hand of God, and in due time he will lift you up.



I PETER V. 6.

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

**I**N the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle presseth the duties of church-officers towards the people, and then the duty of the people both towards their officers and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, *submission*. For which causes he recommends humility as the great mean to bring all to their respective duties. This is inforced with an ar-

H argument

guement taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble; his opposing himself to the one, and shewing favour to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration. And in it we have,

I. The duty we are therefore to study, *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* And therein we may notice,

(1.) The state of those whom it is proposed to, these under the mighty hand of God, whom his hand has humbled, or stated some way low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these are, I think, meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those, who, by the providence of God, are any manner of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause he has, by his mighty hand, subjected men, one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters, and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depends on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate being *major singulus, minor universis*. This state of the world God has made for taking trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others; and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. *Then cometh the end---when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power, 1 Cor. xv. 24. 25.* Mean time, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God's mighty hand has subjected them.

(2.) The duty itself, *viz.* Humiliation of our spirits under humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*



*time.* Whether it is we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometimes in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must therein eye the mighty hand of God, as that which placed us there, and is over us there to hold us down in it ; and so, with an awful regard thereto, crouch down under it, in the temper and disposition of our spirit, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

(3.) A particular spring of this duty, therefore we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the place assigned them of God in their afflictions or relations, but still press upward against the mighty hand that's over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before ; whereas it treats them with grace and favour that compose themselves under it, to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation ; so that eyeing this we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2. The infallible issue of that course, that he may exalt you in due time. The particle that, is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action, John ix. 2. 1 John ii. 19. So there, the meaning is not, Humble yourselves, on design he may exalt you, but—and it shall issue in his exalting you. Compare James iv. 10.

(1.) Here is a happy event of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation, or lifting up on high, by the power of God, that he, &c. Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun riseth after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the

world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

*Object.* 1. If we let our spirit fall, we will ly always among folks feet, and they will trample on us.

*Answ.* No ; pride of spirit unsubdued, will bring men to ly among the feet of others for ever, Isa. lxvi. 24. But humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from among their feet, Mal. iv. 2. 3. They that humble themselves now will be exalted for ever ; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast ye yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves ye shall not ly there.

*Object.* 2. If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us ; and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right.

*Answ.* That is wrong. Humble ye yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot, or low condition ; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down of the spirit is our duty, raising us up is God's work : let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up, by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of his hand.

*Object.* 3. But sure we will never rise high, if we let our spirits fall.

*Answ.* That is wrong too : God will not only raise the humble ones, but he will lift them up on high ; for so the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low ; nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the date of that happy event, when it will fall out. In due time, or in the season, the proper season for it, Gal. vi. 9. *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* We are apt to weary in humbling trying circumstances, and ay we would have up our head, John vii. 6, But Solomon observes there

there is a time for every thing when it does best, and the wise will wait it, Eccl. iii. There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the due time for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it would come too soon should it come before that time

Doct. I. The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should ly towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.

I. Some things supposed in this. It supposeth and bears in it, that,

*First*, God brings men into humbling circumstances, Ezek. xvii. 24. *And all the trees of the field shall know, that I the Lord have brought down the high tree.* There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth, that must be mortified e'er they can be meet for heaven; and therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof whether he can stoop or no. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that very end, Deut. viii. 2. *The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart*

2. These circumstances prove pressing as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down, Psal. cvii. 12. *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.* They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial natively ariseth, whether, when God lays on his mighty hand, the man can yield under it, or not; and consequently, whether he is meet for heaven or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to rise against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on.

The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more

to please himself than to please his God, Job xxxv. 9. 10. *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: But none saith, Where is God my Maker?* This is the first gate the heart runs to in humbling circumstances, and in this way the unsubdued spirits hold on.

5. But what God requires, is, rather to labour to bring down the heart, than to get up the head James iv. 10. Here lies the proof of one's meetness for heaven; and then is one in the way heaven-ward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart, than up his head, to go calmly under his burden, than to get it off, to crouch under the mighty hand than to put it off him.

*Lastly*, There must be a noticing of God as our party, in humbling circumstances, *Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it*, Micah vi. 9. There is an abjectness of spirit, whereby some give up themselves to the will of others, in the harshest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, whereby one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight: and none so readily fall into it as the proud, at sometimes, to serve their own turn, Acts xii. 22. These are men pleasers, Eph. vi. 6. with Gal. i. 10.

II. What are these humbling circumstances the mighty hand of God brings them into. Supposing here what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot's being of God's making, these are circumstances,

1. Of imperfection. God has placed all men in such circumstances, under a variety of wants and imperfections, Phil. iii. 12. We can look no where where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us: our bodies and our souls, *i. e.* all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained, and it is a shame for us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us; it is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of



2. Of inferiority in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others, 1 Cor. vii. 24. God has for a trial of men's submission to himself, subjected them to others whom he has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to his authority and commands at second hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the divine image shining in them, 1 Cor. xi. 7. And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the divine image shining in them, is necessarily required, Eph. v. 32. Heb. xii. 9. compare, Psal. cxi. 9. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, viz. that they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, Psal. lxxxii. 6. And though the parties be worthless in themselves, that he loseth not one from the debt to them, Acts xxiii. 4. 5. Rom. xiii. 7. The reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection; and the trial God takes of us in that matter turns not on the point of the former, but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness in all things, not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against his mighty hand, Rom. xiii. 2. because it is mediately upon us for that effect, tho' it is man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of contradiction, tending directly to baulk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too, Heb. xii. 3. There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there; for they are in their state of retribution and exaltation, but we are here in our state of trial and humiliation and therefore cannot miss contradiction; be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God trytes men with them to humble them, break them off from addictedness to their own will, and  
to

to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us, as the breaking of a horse or a bullock is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of affliction, Prov. xvi. 19. *Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride*; and O! but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God by affliction calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their jay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears more in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under affliction is to pretend to rise up when God is casting and holding down, with a witness, and cannot miss, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces, Ezek. xiv. 12. For the afflicting hand is mighty.

*Lastly*, Of sin as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that, Job xxx. 9. All the sin in the world is a punishment of Adam's first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left waltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is over-ruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humbled under our sinfulness, is to rise up against the mighty hand of God, and to justify all our sinful departings from him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

III. What it is in humbling circumstances, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances. And we may take it up in these eight things.

#### I. Noticing

1. Noticing the mighty hand, as employed in bringing about every thing that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "And he said, It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. And the king said, "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David : Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so ? He is the Fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to his sovereign will. It is he that has posted every one in their relations by his providence ; without him we could not meet with such contradictions for ' the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, ' as the rivers of water : he turneth it whithersoever ' he pleaseth,' Prov xxi. 1. He sends on afflictions, and he justly punishes one sin with another, Isa. vi. 10.

2. A sense of our own worthlessness and nothingness before him, Psal. cxliv. 3. Looking to the infinite Majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say, with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. ' Behold I am but dust and ashes,' and say Amen to the cry, Isa. xl. 6. ' All flesh is grass,' &c. The keeping up of thoughts of our own excellency, under the pressures of the mighty hand, is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of his glory, that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our guilt and filthiness, Rom. iii. 10. Isa. xl. 6. The mighty hand doth not press us down, but as sinners ; it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness ; our guilt, whereby we will appear criminals justly caused to suffer ; our filthiness, whereupon we may be brought to lothe ourselves : and then we will think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart for to swell.

4. A silent submission under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us, Rom. ix. 20. ' Nay, ' but, O man, who art thou that repliest against ' God ?'

‘God?’—And nothing but unsubdued height and pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under the sovereign hand. A view of the sovereign hand humbled and awed the Psalmist into a submission, with a profound silence, Psalm xxxix. 9. ‘I was dumb, I opened not my mouth : because thou didst it.— Job i. 21.—‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord.’ And xl. 4. 5. ‘What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer : yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther.’ Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. ‘It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good.’

5. A magnifying of his mercies towards us in the midst of all his proceedings against us, Psalm cxliv. 3. Has he laid us low ? if we be duly humbled, we will wonder he has laid us no lower, Ezra ix. 13. For however low the humble are laid, they will see they are not yet so low as their sins deserve, Lam. iii. 23.

6. A holy and silent admiration of the ways and counsels of God, as to us, unsearchable, Rom, xi. 33. Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the divine proceedings, pretends to see through them, censures freely and condemns ; but humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honourably of the mysteries of providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our dignity, whereby we excel others, Rev. iv. 10. Pride feeds itself on the man’s real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God. Luke xviii. 11.—‘God, I thank thee I am not as other men.’ But humiliation of spirit makes it all to vanish before him, as doth the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man in his own eyes, lower than any. ‘Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man,’ Prov. xxx. 2.

*Lastly,*



*Lastly*, A submitting readily to the meanest offices requisite in, or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Hereof our Saviour gave us an example, (Phil. ii. 8 : ' He humbled himself, ' and became obedient unto death, ' ) to be imitated, John xiii. 14. ' If I then your Lord and Master have ' washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.'

*Use.* Let the bent of your heart then, in all your humbling circumstances, be toward the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice all your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections, inferiority in relations, contradictions you meet with, your afflictions, uncertainty of all things about you, and your sinfulness. Look through them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of providence towards you in these, that ye may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and safe.

2. Observing what these circumstances do require of you, as suitable to them, bend your endeavours towards it, to bring your spirits into that temper of humiliation, that, as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, your exercise every day.

*Motive* 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high any are lifted up in this world, Providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them

them or not, *Isaiah xl. 6.* Now it is our duty to fall in with the design of providence, that while God is humbling us, we may be humbling ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirits will not take effect without our own agency therein ; while God is working on us that way, we must work together with him for he works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves, *Phil. ii. 12.*

13. God by his providence may force down our lot and condition without us, but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all ; therefore, strike in with humbling providence in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow, that they may go before it.

3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God ; *Acts vii. 51.* Ye resist in so far as ye do not yield, but stand as a rock keeping your ground against your Maker in humbling providences, *Jer. v. 3—*

‘ Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved :  
‘ thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to re-  
‘ ceive correction. They have made their faces harder  
‘ than a rock ; they have refused to return.’ Much more when ye work against him to force up your condition, which we may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider,

(1.) The sinfulness, what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him, *Isa. xlv. 9.*

(2.) The folly of it. How unequal is the match ? How can the struggle end well ? *Job ix. 4.* What else can possibly be the issue of the potsherds of the earth dashing against the rock of ages, but that they be broken to pieces ? We may say, as *Job xli. 8.* All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand.

4. Their

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life, 'Every thing is beautiful in its season : ' and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful as in the time thereof, even as the plowing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Peter iii. 4. As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility, chap. v 5. The humbling of sinners and bringing them down from their heights, wherein the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of his word, and of his providences.

(2.) It is no easy thing to humble men's spirits : it is not little that will do it, it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion, Luke vi. 48. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart ere it fall ; oft-times it seems to be fallen, and yet it arises again. And, even when the root-stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 2.

It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men, Heb. xii. 2. And in that time they must either be formed according to his image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means, Rom. viii. 29. So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4.) There is no humbling after, Rev. xxii. 11. If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be : no kindly humiliation is to be expected in the other life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened ; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the unhumbleness of their spirits will still remain,

whence they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition betwixt their spirits and lov, Revel. xvi. 21.

Wherefore beware lest ye sit your time of humiliation ; humbled we must be, or we are gone for ever ; and this is the time, the only time of it : therefore make your hay while the sun shines ; strike in with humbling providences, and fight not against them while ye have them, Acts xiii. 41. The season of grace will not last ; if ye sleep in seed time ye will beg in harvest

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account ; so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them, psalm cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* Would ye gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is a most valuable thing in itself, Prov. xvi. 32. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is thereby duly brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for, 1 Peter iii. 4.

(2.) Humility of spirit brings many advantages along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well loaden, wherever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross, Matth. xi. 30. Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God, Psal. li. 17. The eye of God is particularly on such for good, Isaiah lxvi. 2. — *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* Yea, he dwells with them, Isa. lvii. 15. And it carries a line of wisdom thro' one's whole conduct, Prov. xi. 2. — *With the lowly is wisdom.*

*Lastly,* Consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us ; the hand of the mighty God ? let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall under it. Since the design of it is to bring us down, we cannot stand before it,  
for



for it cannot miscarry in its designs, Isa. xlv. 10.—  
*My counsel shall stand*—So fall before it we must;

either in the way of duty or judgement, Psal xlv.

4. 'Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's  
'enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.'

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they never so low, the same hand will raise them up again, James iv. 10. In a word, be the proud ever so high, God will bring them down. Be the humble ever so low, God will raise them up.

*Directions for reaching this humiliation.*

I. General Directions.

*Direct.* 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of providence towards you, Micah vi. 9. Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected, Hosea xiv. 9. But nothing more reasonable, if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at turning what is so grievous to the flesh unto the profit of the spirit; that if we are losers at one hand, we may be gainers at another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the first place, by betaking yourself to Christ, and taking God for your God in him, according to the gospel-offer, Hosea ii. 19 Heb. viii. 10. Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the Fountain: for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under the mighty hand, without faith in him as your God and friend, Heb. xi. 6. 1 John iv. 19.

3. Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise, Psal. xxviii. 7. Moses smiting the rock in the faith of the promise, made waters gush out, which otherwise would not at all have appeared. Let us do likewise in dealing with our rocky hearts. They must be laid in the soft bed of the gospel, and

struck there, as Joel ii. 13.— ‘ Turn to the Lord  
 ‘ your God : for he is gracious and merciful !’ Or they  
 will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

## II. Particular Directions.

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances so humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart acceptably brought down to them, 1 Cor. x. 13. ‘ But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’ This is truth, 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‘ My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ And you would be persuaded of it, with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task. ‘ For our sakes this is written, That he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope,’ 1 Cor. ix. 10. And the belief thereof is a piece of the life of faith, 2 Tim. ii. 1. If you have no hope of success, your endeavours as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. ‘ Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,’ Heb. xii. 12.

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take God for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under his mighty hand, Micah vi. 9. Men, in their humbling circumstances, overlook God ; so they find not themselves called to humility under them : they fix their eyes on the creature instrument, and instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take him for your party, that ye may remember the battle, and do no more, Job xli. 8.

3. Be much in the thoughts of God’s infinite greatness : consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, Isaiah vi. 3---5.

Job

Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord made a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder, Job xxxvii. 1. 2. Then followed God's voice out of the whirlwind, chapter xxxviii. 1. whereon Job is brought down, chapter xl. 4, 5. It is renewed till he is farther humbled, chapter xlii. 5. 6. *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

4. Inure yourselves silently to admit mysteries in the conduct of providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore, Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments; and his ways past finding out!* That was the first word God said to Job, chap. xxxviii. 2. 'Who is this that darkneth counsel by words without knowledge?' It took him by the heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, chap. xlii. 3. as that which particularly brought him to his knees to the dust. Even in these steps of providence, which we seem to see far into, we may well allow there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And, in these which are perplexing and puzzling sovereignty should silence us; his infinite wisdom should satisfy, though we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness, Job xl. 4. 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' It is overlooking of that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held that they cannot see sin, the heart riseth against them; but when they are opened, it falls.

Wherefore, whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes, upon that  
I. 3
occasion,

occasion, on the sinfulness of your nature, heart, and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart, that there is need of all the humbling circumstances you are put in. This is truth, 1 Peter i. 6. 'Though now for a season, (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' God brings no needless trials upon us, afflicts none but as their need requires, Lam. iii. 33. 'For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' That is an observable difference betwixt our earthly and heavenly Father's correction, Heb. xii. 10. 'they---after their own pleasure; but HE for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Look to the temper of your own hearts and nature, how apt to be lift up, forget God, carried away with the vanities of the word; what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for ballast, and of the rod for the fool's back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe it on the ground of God's infinite wisdom that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind design of providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them, Rev. iii. 19. Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut, 2 Kings vi. 33.---'This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' As long as the suspicions of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man's feet, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow; but the faith of a kind design will cause it open out itself in humility before him.

*Case.* O! if I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of providence against me therein. *Ans.* Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven have you to ground these fears upon? None at all, but from hell, 1 Cor.



x. 13. What think you the design towards you in the gospel is? Can you believe no kind design towards you in all the words of grace there heaped up? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, Isa. lv. 1. flying in the face of the truth of God, and making him a liar, 1 John v. 10. 11. The gospel is a breathing of love and good-will to the world of mankind sinners, Tit. ii. 11. and iii. 4. 1 John iv. 14. and John iii. 17. But ye believe it not, in that case, more than devils believe it. But if ye can believe a kind design there, ye must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of providence cannot be contrary to the design of the gospel; but contrarywise the latter is to help forward to the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of trial for heaven, James i. 12. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances on that view, verse 3. 'Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.' If there is an honourable office, or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trials for it, in hope they may be there upon legally admitted to it. Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teacheth; and shall men be so very loth to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trials for heaven? Is there not an honour in it, an honour which all the saints have had? James v. 11 *Behold we count them happy that endure,* &c.-----And a fair prospect in it, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Do but put the case, that God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that he should order

order your portion in this life with full ease, as one that is to get no more of him : what would that be ?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between your trials and the glory ? Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it ? The longest continued of them are but for a moment, compared with that eternal weight. Alas ! there is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under our humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world, we would not make so much either of the smiles or frowns this.

(3.) What think ye of coming foul off the trial of your humbling circumstances ? Jer vi. 29. 30. ' The lead is consumed of the fire : the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Refractory silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them,' That the issue of it be only, that your heart appear of such a temper as by no means to be humbled ; and that therefore you must and shall be taken of them, while yet no humbling appears. I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such, as might set us to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, e're our hearts are humbled, Isaiah i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13.

9. Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord prepares us for heaven, Col. i. 12. ' Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' with 2 Cor. v. 5. The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, e're they be set up in the building ; and not just set up as they come out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron-tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how think ye to be made meet for heaven, by the warm sunshine of this world's ease, and getting all your will here ? No sirs, that would put your mouths out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour

dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honour for glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

(1.) Will nothing please you but two heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place where they shall get all their will, wish, and desire; where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down; and that is in the other world. But ye must have it both here and there, or ye cannot digest it. Why do ye not quarrel too, that there are not two summers in one year; two days in twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days, and ye will not reverse it; therefore chuse ye whether you will take your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

(2.) Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life, ye are not capable of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* Ye may indeed ly at ease here in a bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom; but without ye be humbled ye are not capable.

1. Of the Bible-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testament. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But how shall ye be lifted up that are never well gotten down? Where will your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph, that will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you, who cannot away with labour?

2. Of the saint's heaven, Rev. vii. 14. 'And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' This answers the question anent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints with them there: they were brought

brought down to the dust with humbling circumstances, and out of these they came before the throne. How can ye ever think to be lifted up with them, with whom ye cannot think to be brought down ?

3. Of Christ's heaven, Heb. xii. 2. ' Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right-hand of God.' O consider how the Forerunner made his way, Luke xxiv. 26. ' Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?' And lay your accounts with it, that if ye get where he is, ye must go thither as he went, Luke ix. 23. ' And he said, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.'

10. Give up at length with your towering hopes from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till ye come there. There is a prevailing evil, Isa. lvii. 10. ' Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way ; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.' So the Babel-building is still continued, tho' it has fallen down again and again : For men say, ' The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones ; theycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars,' Isaiah ix. 10. This makes humbling work very longsome, we are not so hard to quit our grip of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned. But fasten your grips on the other world, and let your grip of this go : so shall ye be humbled under the mighty hand. The faster you grip the happiness of that world, the easier will it be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

Lastly, Make use of Christ in all his offices, for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in that way, Zech. xii. 10. — " And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn."



“mourn,” &c. That you must do by trusting on him for that effect,

(1.) As a priest for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances, and far more in humbling circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of Christ will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, *Is. xxxiii. 24.* and fit for service, doing or suffering, *Heb ix. 14.* ‘How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?’

(2.) As your prophet to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances: for often we mistake them so far, that they prove an oppressing load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need Christ, and the light of his word and Spirit, to let us see our cross and trial, as well as our duty, *Psal. xxv. 9. 10.*

(3.) As your king. You have a stiff heart, loth to bow even in humbling circumstances: take a lesson from Moses what to do in such a case, *Exod. xxxiv. 9.* ‘And he said—Let my Lord, “I pray thee, go amongst us, (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin.”—Put it in His hand that is strong and mighty, *Psal. xxiv. 8.* He is able to cause it melt, and like wax, before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these directions, in order to put them in practice, remembering that if ye ‘know these things,’ ‘happy are ye if ye do them.’ Remember, humbling work is a work that will fill your hand, while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you, while you are in this lower world. A change of them ye may get; but a freedom from them ye cannot, till ye come to heaven. So the humbling

bling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties, and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here. What remains of the purpose of this text, I shall comprise in,

Docr. II. There is a due time, wherein these that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, will certainly be lifted up.

We shall take,

1. A general view of this point. And consider,

(1.) Some things supposed and implied in it. It bears,

1. That these who shall share of this lifting up, must lay their accounts, in the first place, with a casting down, Rev. vii. 14. John xvi. 33.—*In the world ye shall have tribulation.* There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness, nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with casting down, we will not taste of the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the mighty hand of God, we must learn to ly still and quiet under it, till the same hand that casts us down raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up, Lam. iii. 27. It is not the being cast down into humbling circumstances by the providence of God, but the coming down of our spirits under them by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Never humbled in humbling circumstances, never lifted up in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up, Prov. xvi. 19. But note this, what they get will be a lifting up, to the end they may get the more grievous fall. 'Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down in a moment,' Ps. lxxiii. 18. But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances, will find their obstinacy a need nail, that will keep

keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them some time with the good will and favour of heaven, Luke xviii. 14. 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' Solomon observes, Prov. xv. 1. That 'a soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.' And so it is, that while the proud, through their obstinacy, do but wreathe the yoke faster about their necks, the yielding humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure, 1 Sam. ii. 8, 9, 10. 'He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.—He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.' So the cannon-balls breaks down a stone wall, while the yielding packs of wool take away its force.

5. There is an appointed time for the lifting up of these that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances, Hab. ii 3. 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. To every thing there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up, Eccl. iii. 3. We know it not, but God knows it, who hath appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I will never be lifted up: there is a time fixt for it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun, after the long and dark night, or the return of the spring after the long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected, that immediately upon one's humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow. No, one is to ly down under the mighty

K

hand,

hand, but ly still waiting the due time; humbling work is longsome work: the Israelites had forty years of it in the wilderness. God's people must be brought to put a blank in his hand, as to the time, and while they have a long night of walking in darkness, must trust, lsa. 1. 10. 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'

7. The appointed time for the lifting up is the due time, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come most seasonably. 'And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not,' Gal. vi. 9. For that is the time God has chosen for it: and be sure his choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best: and therefore faith sets to wait it, lsa. xxviii. 16. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' There is much of the beauty of a thing depends on the timing of it, and he has fixt that in all he does, Eccl. iii. 11. 'He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.'

*Lastly*, The lifting up of the humbled will not miss to come in the appointed and due time, Hab. ii. 3. Time makes no halting, it is running day and night; so the due time is fast coming, and, when it comes, it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeless, it is impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time.

H. A word in the general to the lifting up abiding those that humble themselves. There is a two-fold lifting up.

1. A partial lifting up, competent to the humbled in time during this life, Psal. xxx. 1. 'I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.' This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect, while in this world,



world, but no more. These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease. So Israel, in the wilderness, in midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones, Exod. xv. 1. Numb. xxi. 17.

2. A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death. Luke xvi. 22. *It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.* Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but carries their relief to perfection, Heb. 12. 23. Then he takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on for ever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before, no not when at the highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and therein fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now there is a due time for both these.

1. For the partial lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort, an ease or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times wherein it is needful for his people to be in heaviness, 1 Peter i. 6. To have their hearts brought down with grief, Psal. cvii. 12. But then there is a time really appointed for it, in the divine wisdom, when he will think it is needful to comfort them, as before to bring down, 2 Cor ii. 7. *So that contraryways, ye ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow.* We are in that case in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaister shall ly to, and when the healing plaister shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

2. For the total lifting up. When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all, Job vii. 2, 3. *As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work; so am*

*I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.* But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay a while, and wrestle with our burdens, Phil. i. 24, 25. 'Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.' A few days might have taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would have been over-soon there, if they had made all speed; so they behoved to spend forty years in the wilderness, till their due time of entering Canaan should come. And be sure the saints, entering heaven, will be convinced that the time of it is best chosen, and there will be a beauty in that it was no sooner.

And thus a lifting up is secured for the humble.

III. The certainty of the lifting up of these that humble themselves under humbling circumstances. If one would assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time would certainly come yet, that ye should be rich; when sore sick, that ye shall not die of that disease, but certainly recover, that would help you to bear your poverty and sickness the better, and ye would comfort yourselves with that prospect. However, one may continue poor, and never be rich, may be sick and die of his disease; but whoever humbles themselves under their humbling circumstances; we can assure them from the Lord's word, they shall certainly, without all peradventure, be lifted up out of, and relieved from, their humbling circumstances; they shall certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And ye may be assured thereof from the following considerations.

1. The nature of God duly considered, insures it, Psal. ciii. 8, 9. 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.'

\* ver.' The humbled soul looking to God in Christ, may see three things in his nature jointly securing it.

1. Infinite power, that can do all things. No circumstances ever so low, but he can raise them; so intangling and preplexing, but he can unravel them; so hopeless, but he can remedy them, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with him to help it; but then is the most proper season for him to take it in hand, when all others have given it over, Deut. xxxii. 36. 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.'

2. Infinite goodness inclining to help. He is good and gracious in his nature, Exodus xxxiv. 6,----9. And therefore his power is a spring of comfort to them, Rom. xiv. 4. Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness, joining infinite power in God, may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness, 1 John iv. 16. 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' He has the bowels of a father towards the humble, Psalm ciii. 23. 'Like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' Yea, bowels of mercy more tender than a mother to her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. Wherefore, howbeit his wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them in them for a time, it is not possible he can leave them in them for altogether.

3. Infinite wisdom, that doth nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances, Lam. iii. 32. 33. 'But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' God

sends them on for humbling as the end and design to be brought about by them: when that is obtained, and there is no more use for them that way, we may assure ourselves they will be taken off.

2. The providence of God, viewed in its stated method of procedure with its objects, insures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the divine providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

1. Observe the providence of God, in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's humbled ones be idle spectators of these things: they are for our learning, Jer. xxxi. 35. 36. 37. 'Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar: The Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Will the Lord's hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea, and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in them after a casting down, and only forget his humble ones? No.

2. Observe the providence of God, in the dispensations thereof about the man Christ, the most noble and august object thereof, more valuable than a thousand worlds, Col. ii. 9. Did not providence keep this course with him, first humbling him, then exalting him, and lifting him up? first bring him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty three years, then exalt him to the Father's right-hand in eternity of glory? Heb. xii. 2.--- 'Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.' Phil. ii. 8. 9. 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,



himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. The exaltation could not fail to follow his humiliation, Luke xxiv. 26. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' And he saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed doth the sowing it, John xii. 24. There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have herein.

(1.) This is the pattern Providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The Father was so well pleased with this method in the case of his own Son, that it was determined to be followed, and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 29. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the First born among many brethren.' And who would not be pleased to walk through the darkest valley treading his steps?

(2.) This is a sure pledge of your lifting up. Christ, in his state of humiliation, was considered as a public person and representative, and so is he in his exaltation. So Christ's exaltation insures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances, Isa. xxvi. 19. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.' Hosea vi. 1. 2. Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, Eph. ii. 6. 'And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Yea, he is gone into the state of glory for us as our fore-runner, Heb. vi. 20. 'Whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever.——'

(3.) His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and his exaltation a full testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full, There are no humbling

humbling circumstances ye are in, but ye would have perished in them, had not he purchased your lifting up out of them by his own humiliation, Isa. xxvi. 19. Now, his humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of his humiliation for your lifting up.

3. Observe the providence of God towards the church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her, Psal. cxxix. 1.—4. Abel was slain by the wicked Cain, to the great grief of Adam and Eve, and the rest of their pious children: but then there was another seed raised up in Abel's room after, Gen. iv. 25. Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark more than a year; but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed. Abraham for many years went childless; but at length Isaac was born. Israel was long in miserable bondage in Egypt; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock, and if in humiliation, we will surely follow them in exaltation too.

4. Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of his grace towards his children. The general rule is, 1 Pet. v. 5. 'For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before, Luke vi. 48. And ordinarily the greater measure of grace is designed for one, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a back-slidden case, the same method is followed: so that deepest humiliations ordinarily make way for the greatest comforts, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon them, Isa. lxvi. 5.—13.

*Lastly*, Observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men however long they stand and prosper, Psal. xxxvii. 35. 36. 'I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo  
he

' he was not ; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.' They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east wind, and wither away : their lamp goes out with a flink, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the benignity of the divine nature, to forget the humble to raise them, while he minds the proud to abase them.

3. The word of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saints security for a lifting up, Psal. cxix. 49. 50. ' Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction : for thy word hath quickened me.' His word is the great letter of his name, which he will certainly see to cause to shine. Psal. cxxxviii.

3. ' For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name ; and in all generations has been safely lippened to. Psal. xii. 6.

1. Doctrines of the word, which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue the exercise of these graces will have. The whole current of scripture, to these in humble circumstances is, ' Not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end ;' and that for this good reason, ' that it shall not be in vain.' See Psalm xxvii. 14. ' Wait on the Lord ; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart ; Wait, I say, on the Lord. And compare Rom. ix. 33. Isa. xlix. 23. ' For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

2. The promises of the word, whereby heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to these that humble themselves in humbling circumstances, James iv. 10. ' Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.' Matth. xxiii. 12. ' And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done it is secured, Psal. x. 17. ' Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; thou wilt prepare their

‘ their heart ; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.’ They have his word for deliverance, Psal. l. 15. And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not always be so ; the time of their deliverance will come, Psal. ix. 18. ‘ For the needy shall not be always forgotten : the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.’ Psal. cii. 17. ‘ He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.’

3. The examples of the word sufficiently confirming the truth of the doctrines and promises, Rom. xv.

4. ‘ For whatsoever things were written afore time, were written for our learning ; that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope.’ In the doctrine and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith, to be reckoned on the credit of God’s word ; but, in the examples it is, in the case of others, set before our eyes to be seen, James v. 11. ‘ Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord : that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.’ There we see it in the case of Abraham, Job, David, Paul, and other saints ; but above all in the case of the Man Christ.

4. The intercession of Christ, joining the prayers and cries of his humbled people in their humbling circumstances, insures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when he bindeth them, yet his own humbled ones will not do so, they will cry, Psal. xlii. 7. 8. ‘ Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts : all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life.’ And though unbelievers may soon be outwearied, and give it over for altogether, sure believers will not do so ; but tho’ they may, in a fit of temptation lay it by as hopeless, they will find themselves obliged to take it up again, Jer. xxix. 9. ‘ Then I said, I will not make mention



‘ mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.  
‘ But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire,  
‘ shut up in my bones, and I was weary with for-  
‘ bearing, and I could not stay ;’ and continue to  
cry on night and day, Luke xviii. 7. knowing no time  
for giving it over till they be lifted up, Lam. iii. 49.  
50. ‘ Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not without  
‘ any intermission, till the Lord look down, and be-  
‘ hold from heaven.’ Now Christ’s intercession be-  
ing joined with these cries, there cannot miss to be a  
lifting up. Consider,

1. Christ’s intercession is certainly joined with the  
cries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling  
circumstances, Rev. viii. 3. ‘ And another angel  
‘ came and stood at the altar, having a golden cen-  
‘ ser ; and there was given unto him much incense,  
‘ that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints  
‘ upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.’  
They are by the Spirit helped to groan for relief,  
Rom. viii. 26. and the prayers and groans, which are  
through the Spirit, are certainly to be made effectual  
by the intercession of the Son, James v. 16. And ye  
may know they are by the Spirit, if so be ye are  
helped to continue praying, hoping for your suit at  
last on the ground of God’s word of promise ; for  
nature’s praying is a pool that will dry up in a long  
drought. ‘ It is the spirit of prayer is the lasting  
spring, John iv. 14. Psal. cxxxviii. 3. ‘ In the day  
‘ when I cried thou answeredst me ; and strengthen-  
‘ edst me with strength in my soul.’ Truly there is  
an intercession in heaven, on account of the humbling  
circumstances of the humble ones. ‘ Then the angel  
‘ of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts,  
‘ how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and  
‘ on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had  
‘ indignation these threescore and ten years ?’ Zech. i.  
12. How then can they miss of a lifting up in due time?

2. He is in deep earnest in his intercession for  
his people in their humbling circumstances. Some  
will

will speak a good word in favour of the helpless, that will be little concerned whether they come speed or not: but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of his humbled ones: for he is touched with sympathy in their case, Isa. lxiii. 9. *In all their afflictions he was afflicted* ---- A most tender sympathy, Zech. ii. 8. *For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* He has their case upon his heart, where he is, in the holy place in the highest heavens, Exod. xxviii. 29. and he keeps exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, be it as long as it will, Zech. i. 12. Moreover, it is his own business, the lifting up they are to have is a thing that is secured to him, in the promises made to him on the account of his blood shed for them, Psal. lxxxix. 33. 36. So not only are they looking on earth, the Man Christ is in heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, Heb. x. 12. 13. 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right-hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.' How is it possible then, that that looking should be balked? Moreover, these humbling circumstances are his own sufferings still, though not in his person, yet in his members, Col. i. 24. 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church.' Wherefore there is all ground to conclude he is in deep earnest.

*Lastly,* His Intercession is always effectual, John xi. 42. *And I know that thou hearest me always.* It cannot miss to be so, because he is the Father's well-beloved Son, his intercession has a plea of justice for the ground of it, 1 John ii. 1. 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.' Moreover, he has all power in heaven and earth lodged in him, John v. 22. and finally, he and his Father are one, and their will one. So, for the present time, both Christ and his Father do will the lifting up

up of the humbled ones, but yet only in the due time.

II. I proceed to a more particular view of the point. And,

I. We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. And,

(1.) Some considerations for clearing the nature thereof.

1. This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. One may be humbled in humbling circumstances, from which he is to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude, that we being humbled under our humbling circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them, and freed from them e're we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain, there are some, such as our imperfections, and sinfulness, and mortality, we can by no means be rid of while in this world. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may hang about one, and keep about him till they go down to the grave, while, in the mean time, he may lift up another from the same. Heman was pressed down all along from his youth, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. others all their life time, Heb ii. 15

*Object.* ' If that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may go to the grave under the weight?'

*Ans/w.* Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but since there is another life, there is none in it at all. In the other life the promise will be accomplished to the humbled, as it was, Luke xvi. 22. Consider, that the great term for accomplishing the promises, is the other life, not this. ' These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Heb. xi. 13. And that whatever accomplishment of the promise is here, it is not of the nature of the stock, but of a sample or a pledge.

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*Quest.*

*Quest.* 'But then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up in that case? *Ans.* We do not know when that is our case: for a case may be past all hope in our eyes, and the eyes of others, in which God designs a lifting up in time, as in Job's, chap. vi. 11. 'What is my strength that I should hope? And what is my end that I should prolong my life?' But, be it as it will, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray in faith for it; if not here, yet hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment; so such praying cannot miss of a happy issue at length, Psal. l. 15. 'And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' The whole life of a Christian is such a praying, waiting life, to encourage whereunto all temporal deliverances are given as pledges, Rom. viii. 23. 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of our body.' And whoso observes that full lifting up at death to be at hand, must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

2. However, there are some cases wherein this lifting up does take place. God gives his people some notable liftings up, even in time raising them out of remarkable humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail, Psal. xl. 1,—4. Two things may be observed on this.

(1.) One may be in humbling circumstances very long, and sore and hopeless, and yet a lifting up may be abiding them, of a much longer continuance. This is sometimes the case of the children of God, who are set to bear the yoke in their youth, as it was with Joseph and David; and of them that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not be less than forty at his trouble's



trouble's coming, but, after that, lived one hundred and forty, Job xlii. 16. God by such methods prepares men for peculiar usefulness.

(2.) One may be in humbling circumstances long and sore, and quite hopeless, in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a clear and warm blink of lifting up, e're they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, wherein, in the evening, the sun breaks out from under the clouds, shines fair and clear a little, and then sets. 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark,—But it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light,' Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Such was the case of Jacob in his old age, brought in honour and comfort to Egypt unto his Son, and then died.

(3.) Yet whatever liftings up they get in this life, they will never want some weights hanging about them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs while in this world, will be mixed with groanings, 2 Cor. v. 4. 'For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.' The unmixed dispensation is reserved for the other world: but this will be a wilderness unto the end, where there will be howlings with the most joyful notes.

*Lastly.* All the liftings up the humbled meet with now are pledges, and but pledges, samples, \* arlepenies of the great lifting up, abiding them on the other side; and they should look on them so.

(1.) They are really so, Hosea ii. 15. 'And I will give her vineyards from hence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came out of the land of Egypt.' Our Lord Jesus is leading his people now through the wilderness, and the manna and water of the rock are earnest for the time of the milk and honey

ney flowing in the promised land. They are not yet come home to their Father's house : but they are travelling on the road, and Christ their elder Brother with them, Cant. iv 8. who bears their expences, takes them into the inn by the way, as it were, and refreshes them with partial liftings up, after which they must get to the road again. But that entertainment by the way is a pledge of the full entertainment he will afford them when come home.

*Object.* ' But people may get a lifting up in time, ' that yet is no pledge of a lifting up on the other ' side : How shall I know it then to be a pledge?'

*Answ.* That lifting up, which comes by the promises, is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world ; for, as the other life is the proper time of the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure, that when God begins once to clear his bond, he will certainly hold on till it is fully cleared. ' The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me,'—Psal. cxxxviii. 8. So we may say as Naomi, to Ruth, upon her receiving the six measures of barley from Boaz, Ruth iii. 18.—' He will ' not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day.' There are liftings up that come by common providence, and these indeed are single, and not pledges of more ; but the promise chains mercies together, so that one got is a pledge of another to come, yea, of the whole chain to the end, 2 Sam. v. 12.

*Quest.* ' But how shall I know the lifting up to ' come by the way of the promise?' *Answ.* That which comes by the way of the promise, does at once come the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope, and patient countenance, James. v. 7. ' Be patient, therefore brethren, unto the ' coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman wait- ' eth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath ' long patience for it, until he receive the early ' and latter rain.' Humility qualifies for the accom-  
plishment

plishment of the promise, faith sucks the breasts of it, and patient waiting hangs by the breast till the milk come abundantly.

(2) But no lifting up of God's children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but his children get nothing but a sample of theirs here, Psal. xvii. 14. Even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending-money. The truth is, the same spending-money is more valuable than the world's stock, Psal. iv. 7. 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and there wine increased.' But though it is better than that and their services too, and more worth than all their on-waiting, yet it is below the honour of their God to put them off with it, Heb. xi. 16. 'But now they desire a better country, *i. e.* an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.'

II. The partial lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why, they will get,

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances. God, having tried them a while, and humbled them, and brought down their hearts, will at length take off their burden, remove the weight so long hung at them, and so take off that part of their trial joyfully, and let them get up their back long bowed down: and this one of two ways,

(1) Either in kind, removing the burden for good and all. Such a lifting Job got, when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolate. David, when Saul his persecutor fell in battle, and he was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day, expecting one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

(2.) Or in equivalent, or as good, removing the weight of the burden; that tho' it remains, it presses them no more, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 'And he said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is 'made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore 'will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power 'of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in mine infirmities.'—— Though they are not got to the shore, yet their head is no more under the water, but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, Psal. xxvii. 5. 6. 'For in the 'time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in 'the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he 'shall set me on a rock. And now shall mine head 'be lifted up above mine enemies round about me, 'therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of 'joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the 'Lord.' Such had the three children in the fiery furnace; the fire burnt, but it could burn nothing of them but their bonds: they had the warmth and light of it, but nothing of the scorching heat. Sometimes God lifts up his people this way in their humbling circumstances.

2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers, put up in their humble circumstances: While prayers are not answered, but trouble continued, and the hangers-on about the Lord's hand are apt to think they are not accepted or regarded in heaven, because there is no alteration in their case, Job ix. 16. 17. 'If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would 'I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice, 'for he breaketh me with a tempest.' But that is a mistake; they are accepted immediately, though not answered, 1 John v. 14. 'And this is the confidence 'we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he 'heareth us.' The Lord does with them as a father, with the letters coming thick from his son abroad, reads them one by one with pleasure, and carefully lays them up to be answered

at



at his convenience And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father, Matth. xv. 28. So, &c.

3. A heart-satisfying answer to these prayers, *ibid.* so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put a double value on the mercy, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Accepted prayers may be very long of answering, many years, as in Abraham and David's case, but they cannot miscarry of an answer at length, Psalm ix. 18. The time will come when God will tell out to them according to the promise, that they shall change their note, and say, Psal. cxvi. 1. 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.' Looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer hearing God.

4. Full satisfaction, as to the conduct of providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up however perplexing these were before, Rev. xv. 3. Standing on the shore, and looking back to what they have past through, they will be made to say, 'He hath done all things well.' These things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through, are very sweet in the reflection on them; so is Samson's riddle verified in their experience.

5. They get the lifting up, together with the interest for the time they lay out of it. When God pays his bonds of promises, he pays both stock and interest together: the mercy is increased according to the time the man waited on, and the expences and hardships sustained during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providences are soon ripe, soon rotten; but the fruit of the promise is readily long a ripening, but then it is durable, and the longer it is a ripening it is the more valuable when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, at length they thought on a way to hasten it, Gen. xvi. That soon took in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming  
into

into extreme old age e're the promise was brought forth, Gen. xviii. 11. But, when it came, they got it with an addition of the renewing of their ages, Gen. xxi. 7. and xxv. 1. The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in fulfilling, viz. the promise of Christ, that was four thousand years.

*Lastly*, The spiritual enemies that flew thick and throng about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, will be scattered at his lifting up in the promise, 1 Sam. ii. 1. 5. 'And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,---my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies. '---They that were full have hired out themselves for bread.' Formidable was Pharaoh's host behind the Israelites, while they had the red sea before them: but, when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies, when the time comes for their lifting up.

III. The due time of this lifting up. That is a natural question of these in humbling circumstances, *Watchmen, What of the night?* And we cannot answer it to the humble soul, but in general, Isaiah xxi. 11. 12. So take these general observations on it;

1. The lifting up of the humbled will not be long: some, considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble, when it comes it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When you sow your corns in the fields, though they do not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so. yet do not think the harvest long a-coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' So that a believer looking on the promise with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the work of it:

it when accomplished, may wonder it is come in so short on-waiting. Therefore it is determined to be a time that comes soon, Luke xviii. 7. Soon in respect of its weight and worth.

2. When the time comes, it, and only it will appear the due time. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in the season thereof. And we may be sure infinite wisdom cannot miss the season by mistaking it, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement.' But whatever God doth will abide the strictest examination in that, as all other points, Eccles. iii. 14. 'I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: And God doth it, that men should fear before him.' It is true, many times cast up to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there is some circumstance hid to us, which renders that season unfit for the thing. Hence, John vii. 6... 'My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.' But when all the circumstances, always foreknown of God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we will then see the lifting up is come in the nick of time, most for the honour of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner.

3. When the time comes that is really the due time, the proper time for lifting up a child of God from humbling circumstances, it will not be put off one moment longer, Hab. ii. 3. 'At the end it shall speak, it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Though it tarry, it will not linger nor put off to another time. O what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! there is not a child of God but would with the utmost carefulness protest against the lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit casten to him by an angry father, that would set his teeth on edge. Sith it is so then, could we firmly believe this point, that it would undoubtedly come in the due time,

time, without losing a minute, it would afford a sound rest. It must be so, because God has said it: were the case never so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will blow. (Heb.) Hab. ii. 3. A metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm.

4. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac's throat before the voice was heard, 2 Cor. i. 8. 9. 'For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.' Things soon seem to us arrived at that point: such is the hastiness of our spirits. But things may have far to go down, after we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we are almost as little competent judges of the point of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up. But readily God carries his people's humbling circumstances downward, till they come to that point. Two reasons hereof are to be noticed.

(1.) One from the explanatory cause of it. Herein God is holding the same course which he held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved pattern copied after in all the dispensations of providence towards the church, and every particular believer, Rom. viii. 29. He was all along a man of sorrows: as his time went on, the waters swelled more, till he was brought to the dust of death; then he was buried, and the grave-stone sealed; which done, the world thought they were freely quit of him, and he would trouble them no more. But they quite mistook it; then, and not till then, was the due time of lifting him up. And the liftings up that his people get most remarkable; are only little pieces fashioned after this grand pattern.

(2.) Another



(2.) Another from the final cause, the end and design Providence aims at in it, and that is to carry the believer cleanly off his own, and all created bottoms, to bottom his trust and hope in the Lord alone, 2 Cor. i. 9.—‘ That we should not trust in ourselves, but in ‘ God which raiseth the dead.’ The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life of faith: and though faith may act more easily, that it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly, when it acts over the belly of sense. Then is it pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God, Rom. iv. 19. 20. ‘ And being not weak ‘ in faith, he considered not his own body now dead ‘ —neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He ‘ staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:’ and thus it must do when the matter is carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

*Lastly*, Due preparation of the heart, for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances, goes before the due time of that lifting up according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up: the liftings up of the common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will want them no longer, and God flings them to them in anger, ere they are prepared for them, Hosea xiii. 11. *I gave thee a king in mine anger*. — They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it, Jer. vi. 29-30.

This due preparation consists in a due humiliation, Psal. x. 17. And it often takes much work to bring about this, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We would have thought Job was brought very low in his spirit, by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other hand, for a long time. Yet, after all he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to himself, for his humiliation, chap. xxxviii. 1. By that speech of God himself he

was

was brought to his knees, chap. xl. 4, 5. And we would have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so too. But God saw a farther degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore justs begins a-new again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust, chap. xlii. 5, 6. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

There are six things, I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness of being lifted up at all, Job xl. 4. 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' People may be long in humbling circumstances, e're they be brought this length: even good men are much prejudiced in their own favours, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals his favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marketh this wrong in Job, under his humbling circumstances, Job xxxiii. 10, 11, 12. And I believe it will be found there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our own honour from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay upon it, than to vindicate the honour of God in the justice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill-natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, Luke xiii. 4. gives a handle for this byas of the corrupt nature. But God is a jealous God, and when he appears sufficiently to humble, he will cause the matter of our honour to give way, like a sandy brae under our feet, while we shall be obliged to *clever* \* to the vindication of his.

2. A resignation to the divine pleasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready,

and

\* Grip hastily.

and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Hence we are ready to think his word fails; whereas it is but our own rash conclusion from it that fails, Psal. cxvi. 11. *I said in my haste, All men are liars.* Several of the saints have gotten on the finger ends by this means, and thereby learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve, Gen. iv. 1. Another promise was so by believing Abraham, after about ten years on-waiting, Gen. xvi. Another by David, forecited, Psal. cxvi. 11.

If this be the case of any child of God, let them not be discouraged upon it, thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves: they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a snapper that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord.

3. An entire resignation as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working of it; and if that be not kept, the proud heart is stumbled, 2 Kings v. 11. 'But Naaman was wroth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place.' But the Lord will have his people broke off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to him, but leave that to him intirely, as in that same case, verse 14.—'He went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God---and he was clean.' The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow, as if one is blockt up, oft-

times we cannot see another : but our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one, or none at all ; and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up of his people in a way they had no view to, after repeated disappointments from these airths whence they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the degree of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have his people weaned so, that however hasty they have some times been, that they behoved to be so soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord's eyes, and in that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. ' If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again. — But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

5. The continuing of praying and waiting on the Lord in the case, Eph. vi. 18. ' Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.' It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit, that makes people give over praying and waiting, because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time, 2 Kings vi. 33. But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men into that temper, to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over, till the lifting up come whether in time or eternity. Lam iii. 49, 50.

6. Mourning under mismanagements in the trial, Job xlii. 3. ' Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.' The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out all the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again and again. But when the Spirit of God comes duly



to humble, in order to lifting up, he will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering-side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransack it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself; so that his mouth will be stopt.

This is that humility that goeth before the lifting up in time in the way of the promise.

II. We proceed to consider the lifting up as brought about at the end of time, in the other world. And,

I. A word as to the nature of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these five things:

1. There is a certainty of this lifting up, in all cases of the humbled under humbling circumstances. Though one cannot, in every case, make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it will, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side, 2 Cor. v. 1. 'For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Though God's humble children may both break-fast and die on bread of adversity and water of affliction, they will be sure to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter might serve to qualify the former, and make easy under it.

2. It will be a perfect lifting up, Heb. xii. 23. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials, and special furnace, be what it will, that made them many a weary day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores, and lying at the rich man's gate, Luke xvi. 22. and fully delivered. Yea, they will get a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All the imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long a-coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get all together.

(3.) They will not only be raised out of their

low condition, but they will be set up on high, as Joseph, not only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of Egypt. And they will be lifted up,

(1.) Into a high place, Luke xvi. 22. 'The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.' Now they are at best in a low place, but upon this earth: there they will be seated in the highest heavens, Phil. i. 23. with Eph. iv. 10. Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on his throne, Revel. iii. 21. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.'—Though their belly now cleaves to the earth, and men say, Bow down that we may pass over you, they will then be settled in the heavenly mansions, above the sun, moon, and stars.

(2.) Into a high state and condition, a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasinesses, they will be set into a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory; their weighed and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fulness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honour.

4. It will be a final lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down for ever, Rev. vii. 16. When we get a lifting up in time, we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials: but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns, Psal. xxx 6, 7. 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end: and then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

*Lastly,* There will not be the least remaining uneasiness from the humbling circumstances, but, on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the

the remembrance of their humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brethren on the earth, how sumptuously he fared, how Lazarus sat at his gate, and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? Rev. vi. 10. But then they will remember them as waters that fail, as the man recovered to health, remembers his tossings on the sick-bed: and that is a way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what other ways it would be. Certainly the shore of the red sea was the place, that, of all places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key, Rev. xv. 3. And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

II. A word to the due time of this lifting up. There is a particular definite time for it in every saint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our work we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed every one their task, fight, trial and work; and, till that is done, we are in a sort of immortality, John ix. 4. and xi. 9. That work is,

(1.) Doing work, work set to us, by the great Master, to be done for the honour of God and the good of our fellow creatures, Eccl. ix. 10. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that be done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation.

(2.) Suffering work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body, and the Head has divided to the several members their proportions thereof; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share thereof allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that, Col. i. 24.

2. When that lifting up comes, we will see it is most exactly in the due time ; that it was well it was neither sooner or latter : for though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us, absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth ; yet certainly there is a time wherein it is better for the honour of God, and his service, that we be on earth than in heaven, Phil. i. 24. ' Never-theless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for ' you.' And it will be no grief of heart for them, when there, that they were so long in their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

*Use 1.* Let not then the humble cast away their confidence, whatever their humbling circumstances be : let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length ; if not here, yet to be sure hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it, Psal. ix. 18. ' The needy shall not always be forgotten.' If the night were never so long, the morning will come at length.

2. Let patience have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the sea merchant for the return of his ships, the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience, and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait for the time appointed for his lifting up.

Ye have heard much of the *crook* in the *lot*, the excellency of humbleness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one : Ye have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude, We may assure ourselves ' God will at length break in pieces the proud, be ' they never so high ; and he will triumphantly lift ' up the humble, be they never so low.

*End of the Sermons on the Crook in the Lot*

The



*The Unity of the Body of Christ, and the Duties  
the Members owe one to another.*

B E I N G

THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL

S E R M O N S,

Preached on 1 Cor. x. 17.

*For we being many are one bread, and one body: for  
we are all partakers of that one bread.*

ONE great reason why communions do little good is, That communicants are so little concerned in one another for their spiritual welfare. And this hath its rise from their not discerning, and seriously laying to heart the spiritual relation there is among them, by them avouched, and publicly testified by their partaking of one bread at the communion-table. People readily have some notion, that it is a communion with Christ; but few consider that it is a communion of saints, and what duties flow from it as such. I would therefore lay this matter before you, in order to pursue the benefit of our late solemn occasion.

The scope of these words is to shew, That those who partaked of idolatrous feasts were by that action declared one body with idolaters. This is proven by a parity of reasons, viz. That those who partake of the Lord's table, declare themselves one body with the saints. In the preceding verse, he shews the nature of the sacrament of the supper; it is the communion of the body and blood of Christ: a  
sign,

sign, seal, and appointed means of our joint feeding on a slain Saviour, like so many eagles on the slain body. Here he shews the nature of the society of the saints, for whom it is appointed, *viz.* that they are one body, *viz.* the body of Christ; and therefore, being united to him, they have certainly communion in his body and blood. 'For we being many are one bread, and one body: For we are all partakers of that one bread.'

In the words are two things.

1. The spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves asserted; *We many, &c.* He speaks of the whole multitude of believers: They being many particular saints, some men, some women, teachers, taught, weak, strong, are yet so joined, and have such intimate union and communion one with another, that they are one bread, *i. e.* one body represented by the one sacramental bread. If ye ask whose is that body? or who is the Head of it? It is Christ's, 1 Cor. xii. 27. 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and the members in particular.' Not his natural body, but his mystical body; and therefore the many are not such as meet at one communion-table in one congregation, but all the members of Christ's mystical body through the world, for Christ has but one body: and as many grains do make up but one sacramental bread, so they being many do make up but one body.

2. This spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves, inferred from their all partaking of that one bread; *For we being many are one bread, &c.* By that one bread is meant, that bread which is exhibited in the sacrament, *viz.* both the invisible bread, which is Christ himself, and the visible bread which we take into our mouths, the latter the sign of the former. Believing communicants partake of both: they partake of that bread, which is the Lord. So are all united to, and hold communion with the Head as members, and therefore as one body

body among themselves. They partake of the sacramental bread, which is an instituted sign of the other, and thereby profess their communion with Christ the Head, and consequently their communion with the saints, as members of the same body with them. And, in this last, hypocritical communicants join with them, by their partaking, declaring, and avouching themselves to be of the communion of saints, of the mystical body of Christ, and binding themselves to the duty of that communion; although in reality they are not so, as not partaking of the invisible bread, which is Christ the Lord. The case is the same as to baptism. “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,” 1 Cor. xii. 13.

The point to be handled in this doctrine.

Doctr. There is a communion of saints among themselves, as being conjoined into one mystical body of Christ, declared and avouched by partakers of the sacrament, especially that of the Lord’s Supper, every one for themselves.

There are two parts of this doctrine. One is, That there is such a strict and intimate communion and conjunction among the saints, that they are really and truly one body mystically, however many they be. The other is, That one’s partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By a communion, I mean a society having a common interest in things.

I. I shall enquire into the nature of the communion of saints as one body. And,

1. Who are the members of this communion,—of this happy society the body of Christ? There are two sorts of members of it, some in shew only, some in reality. As to the former, I offer two things.

(1.) The openly wicked and profane, amongst whom must be reckoned the grossly ignorant, and all such as have no form of godliness, are not so much

much as visible or apparent members of the communion of saints. They are excluded from the communion of the saints above, Gal. v. 19,—21. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, [adultery, fornication, &c.—Of the which I tell you before, as I have told you intime past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' From the communion of saints below, Acts xxvi. 18. 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light—that they may receive inheritance among them that are sanctified'—and visibly belong to the devil's family, John viii. 44. What though they have been baptized, and are yet in the visible church, they have in effect renounced it, Rom. ii. 25. 'But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.' For though they were baptized into this one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. yet they will have no communion with that body, nor the Head of it. Tho' they got on Christ's mark of baptism in their infancy, they have now got the devil's mark on above it. So Rom. ii. 25. therefore not to be admitted to the Lord's table, Matth. vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs.'

(2.) Masked hypocrites are seeming visible members of this communion, but not real members of it. They are brethren of the saints, but only half brothers, Cant. i. 6. False brethren, Gal. ii. 4. They are among them, and communicate among them, but they are not of them, 1 John ii. 19. But they want the wedding-garment; and though the servants cannot but admit them as visible saints, the Master will throw them out, as none of that communion, in his sight, Matth. xxii. 12.

Hypocrites belong to the mystical body, as a branch bound up, but not knitting with the stock, belongs to the tree, or as a tree-leg belongs to the body; but not otherways. See the case of these members in these three things,

1. They are useful for the mystical-body of Christ, with



with their gifts, as the tree-leg with its strength to the natural body. So was Judas and Demas, &c. Graceless well gifted ministers and professors, they may have a mouth to speak for truth, ay, and hands to act for it too, and the profit redound to the saints, not themselves, who have no heart to embrace it in reality, and to adorn the communion as long as they keep green, as such branches do the tree, by which God is honoured before the world, Psal lxxxi. 15.

2. They are under the particular care of the body, as the tree-leg---and the branch under the gardener's inspection. Hence they get their gifts increased for the good of the body, are preserved from many snares they would otherways fall into if they had nothing at all to do with the communion of saints, as may appear from the way they go when they turn apostates. They fare the better they are in good company. But,

3. They are laid aside at length as the branch, John xv. 2. and the tree-leg, if not before, yet at the time when the body goes to rest, Psal. cxxv 5. Though the living leg be broken, so crazed that for the time it can be of no discernable use for the head, nor for the other members of the body, it is not cast by, nor separate from the body, but its weakness born with, and it healed at length. But the tree-leg goes for altogether.

As to the latter, there are three sorts of these real members,

1. Real members in God's designs, but not yet formed. These are all the elect, who are yet to be born, or yet to be born again, and we cannot have a full view of the body without eying them, Eph. i. 10. 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ'—They shall all of them be formed at length, all conjoined into the body, and they all belong to the perfection of the body, for carrying on of which the ministry is appointed, Eph. iv. 11.—13. For the  
body

body of Christ is all the elect knit to him as the Head, Eph. v. 23. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.'

3. Real members already perfected, at least as to their souls. These are the saints triumphant, who are with us members, fellow-members of the body of Christ, though glorified ones. Therefore, Heb. xii. 22. 23. "But ye are come---to the general assembly and church of the first-born--and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Even they, as high as they are, are of this communion of saints, of the same family of heaven with us militant on earth, though they are in the upper rooms, and we in the lower, Eph. iii. 15.

3. Real members formed, but not perfected yet. These are the saints on earth, even all of them upon the face of the earth, whatever particular visible church they belong to; at whatever distance they are one from another, though they never saw, nor never will see one another's face till they come to meet in glory, they are all one body, all members of that one body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12. 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members—be many, are one body, so also is Christ.'

These last are they whom our text speaks of, as one body partaking of the sacramental bread, viz. the body of Christ, as to that part of it which is on earth; and of this we speak. So there is a communion of saints on earth, and all the saints are members of it: where-ever they dwell, whatever lesser points of doctrine, worship, &c. they differ in, they have communion with one another, as being all conjoined into one body.

II. Wherein this communion of saints consists; or how they are one body.

1. They have all one head, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of all the saints, Eph. i. 22. 23.—'And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body.'—They are all united

to him by his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.' And from him as their Head, they derive vital influences, Col. ii. 19.—'From which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment administered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' There may be great difference betwixt members, in respect of growth, liveness, and usefulness; but the meanest have communion with the highest in one head, which is common to them all. So they are all under the direction, government, and influence of Jesus Christ, as their common head.

2. They are all animated, enlivened, and actuated by one spirit, viz. the Holy Spirit of Christ. This Spirit dwells in Christ as the Head, and in all the saints as his members, Rom. viii. 9. and unites them to the Head, and among themselves too, so that they are one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. A tree-leg, though bound close to the body, is no member of it, because it is not animated by the soul and life of that body; but if there were a body of a man whose head did reach the clouds, any toe of that man's foot, though defiled by the ground it toucheth, is as really a member of that body as the shoulders are, having communion with them in the same soul or spirit, which actuates the one as well as the other.

Great is the difference of the saints souls or spirits, as men and women; some are bold, some fearful. It is as easy for some to draw the sword in Christ's quarrel as for others to speak a word for him. Some are of clear, chearful, easy, active spirits; some under a spirit of heaviness and indisposition for action; but as saints, they have all one spirit: whoso could discern, how unanimously they vote Christ to be the King of the Heart, of the church; of the world, against the torrent of solicitations from the devil, world, and flesh; how, as with one eye, they look up to God in Christ as their only happiness, and away from the world, which the

rest of mankind fix their eye on ; how with one heart and one soul they all groan under the remains of sin, and for perfection in holiness, though some louder than others ; he behoved to say, These all have one spirit of faith, holiness, and contempt of the world, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Numb. xiv. 24.

3. One grace of faith wrought by the self-same spirit in them all, Col. ii. 12. terminates in and knits them to one Head, the Lord Jesus, Eph. iii. 17. As all the lines drawn from the circumference meet in the center, and there have communion ; so the faith of all God's elect meet in Jesus Christ, and thus they have communion among themselves, Tit. i. 1,—4. Thus are they one body, as being all knit to the Head, by one and the same spiritual band for kind. The strong faith grips here, the weak faith reacheth to him ; though the weak hand of faith is not so steady, nor grips so hard as the other, yet both knit, Cant. iv. 9. and v. i.

4. They have all one heart and mind in respect of fundamentals, Eph. iv. 5. One faith, viz. of doctrine, the substance of which was and ever will be the same, Heb. xiii. 8. Whatever be their different sentiments, as to inferior truths, they all agree in the main, Acts iv. 12. 'Neither is their salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' Thus, according to the promise, Jer. xxxii. 39. have they *one heart and one way* ; for they are all partakers of that one unction which teacheth all things necessary to salvation, 1 John ii. 20. 'But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.' For they are all taught of God : and that doctrine which contradicts the experience of the saints, and relishes not with discerning souls exercised to godliness, is justly to be suspected, Matth. xi. 19. 'Wisdom is justified of her children.'

5. They are united one to another in love, Col. iii. 14. Eph. iv. 16. This is a powerful cement.

Love



Love cements hearts and souls, and so knits fast. They love one another, though they never saw others faces, if they do but know there are such persons in the world. They love them for the common image of God which they bear; and in all the company of saints this love will break over all the differences in lesser matters among them; so that it is made a mark of a member of that communion, 1 John iii. 14. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.'

*Lastly*, They have a communion in one another's gifts and graces, as the case stands in the natural body, Eph. iv. 16. There is a diversity of gifts and offices in the common body of saints. Some are teachers, some taught; rulers, ruled. Some excel in one gift or grace, some in another: some perhaps cannot be said to excel their fellow-saints in any thing: but all these are for the common advantage of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 27. and the glory of the Head. And, whatever they are, they belong to the whole body, as the light that is in the eye, the strength in the arms, the swiftness in the legs, belong to, and are for the good of the whole body, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things presents, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's.' And every the meanest member and gift has its own use and necessity. See 1 Cor. xii. 13. and downwards.

*Use*. Here is a fellowship you may all partake of, and I invite you all to the communion of saints, 1 John i. 3. 'That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.' Many are ruined with their love of that they call good fellowship. What is the fellowship deserves that name? Not the communion of sinners ruining one another under the influence of Satan and their lusts; not the fellowship of drunkards and revellers, whose common profit and pleasure goes a-

way 'like the crackling of thorns,'—only that it leaves a stink behind; not the fellowship of the men of the world, in advancing some temporal gain, but the communion of saints, the pleasanter, richest, best fellowship in all the world. O! leave the communion of sinners for this; come out from among them, and be separate, joining yourselves to this communion.

## II. The properties of this communion.

1. It is a most honourable communion, for it is a communion with the holy Trinity, 1 John 1. 3. 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.' And,

(1.) The Father is the Head and Father of the communion, Eph. iv. 6. 1 Cor. xi. 3. He is Father Creator of all men, Acts xvii. 29. But of the communion of saints he is Father by a special, gracious, saving relation. So that they are all his children, John i. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And they have communion with him, and union through the Lord Jesus Christ, since he and the Father are one.

(2.) The centre of this communion is the Son, the blessed Mediator. In him all meet, 1 Cor. xi. 3. The saints meet in Christ as their Head, and in him the Father meets with them, 2 Cor. v. 19. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Christ presents all believers through the world unto his Father, saying, 'Behold I, and the children which God hath given me,' Heb. ii. 13. So, being the Mediator's, they become his, John xx. 17. In this respect Christ is called the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me.'

(3.) The holy Spirit is the internal original bond of this communion, knitting all the members to Christ, and among themselves, Eph. iv. 4. He brings them together into Christ, and to his Father, fixes and holds them there by his infinite power, that they can never

be broken off again. So believers, members of this communion, have communion with the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3. and the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

2. It is a most rich communion. There are societies and companies this day joining stocks together, to advance worldly wealth, but the richest of them have nothing but trifles in comparison with the company or communion of saints. The communion of saints is the company trading to heaven. And their wealth is past reckoning. For a view of it consider only these two things.

(1.) They have communion with Christ, a common interest with him who is the heir of all these things, so that they may set their name under his, on all that is his. They have communion with him in his perfect righteousness, Isa. xlv. 24. Hence they are all fair, Cant. iv. 7. Clear as the sun, Cant. vi. 10. In his active obedience, so that they have obeyed in Christ, as they sinned in Adam, Rom. viii. 3. 4. In his sufferings and death, Gal. ii. 20. In his resurrection and ascension, Eph. ii. 6. and glory. Compare Heb. vi. 20. They have a common interest in all his purchase, and, as poor as some of them sit, they want nothing, but are complete, Col. ii. 10. *And ye are complete in him.*

They have a real participation of Christ himself, Heb. iii. 14. Of his death and resurrection, Rom. vi. 4. 5. Of his Spirit, Phil. ii. 1. Of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. Of his offices, they are prophets, Psal. cv. 15. Priests and kings, Rev. i. 6. And of his fulness, John i. 16.

(2.) They have communion with God, for so runs the covenant, *I will be your God.* And Psal. cxliv. 15. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as theirs. All his attributes are theirs, the power of God to protect them, the wisdom of God to guide them, &c. and with him all things, since all is his, and he is theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23.

Behold the riches of this company. And *first*, None of the saints bring any thing with them to put in the stock; but they are admitted freely. *Secondly*, Not only is a part for every one, but each one has all; and so it may be since the stock is infinite.

3. It is a most extensive communion. And it extends,

(1.) Over the earth, and so is called the catholic or universal church, 1 Cor. i. 2. Though vast tracts of land and huge seas interpose betwixt them, though they have different languages, so that some of them cannot understand what others say, and their customs are very different, yet none of all these hinder their being members of one and the same body.

(2.) To the heavens. The saints above belong to the communion of saints, Heb. xii. 23. ay, and the holy angels too, in the same sense, verse 22. for the Head of the saints is the Head of angels too, Colos. ii. 10.

*Lastly*, It is a holy communion. It is a fellowship of saints, Eph. ii. 19. 'Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' The head, centre, and bond, and members of this communion, are all holy. There are a society set apart for God, drawn out of the world, lying in wickedness, walking in the way of holiness with displayed banners towards the holy land.

II. That one's partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By partaking of baptism we have all done it once; and by the Lord's supper it is done as oft as we communicate in it. By the former in our infancy, it is done with our virtual consent; by the latter with our exprefs consent. This point will be clear, if we consider the relation the sacrament has to the communion of saints.

1. It is a sign and badge of the communion of saints. *We are one bread*, says the text. The one bread



bread, signifying that we are one body ; and by receiving the sign, and wearing the badge of the society, we declare two things, according to the nature of a distinguishing sign.

(1.) That we are no more of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, which is the opposite society, 1 Cor. x. 21. ' Ye cannot be partakers of the ' Lord's table, and the table of devils.' That we have left our Father's house and people, and are no more to share with them in their way and manner of life. It is the putting on the sign of Zion's King, that we may be distinguished from those that belong to the enemy.

(2.) That we are henceforth of the communion of saints, and not neutrals, Rev. xiv. 1. That we have joined ourselves to that blessed society of saints, the Head of which is Jesus Christ, to take part with them for better and worse. We have said to them, as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. ' Whither thou goest, ' I will go ; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge : ' thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'

2. It is a seal of the communion of saints, and seals it effectually to all those that do sincerely take hold of the covenant, Rom iv. xi. The righteousness of faith is the possession of the society of saints, and the sacrament sealing that to a man ; seals his being of that communion. A believer may be sore pressed with that question, *How shall I put thee among the children ?* But the sacrament, to put it out of doubt, seals and confirms his being put among them. Their being one body is sealed by their partaking one bread. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

3. The sacraments are the external bonds of this communion, whereby they are visibly embodied into one select society, 2 Cor. xii. 13. And hence it is that the uncircumcised under the Old Testament were to be cut off from the people. The church of God makes a visible society in the world ; and it is not the hearing of the word that is the bond of it,

it, for that is left common to any who will: but the sacraments, which are not to be given but to visible believers.

4. It is an engagement to the duties of this communion of saints, 'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love: endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit: even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Whosoever is embodied in a regular society by his entering into it, is obliged to walk by the rules of it. And so the sacrament is an engagement or oath to walk by the rules of holiness, which are the rules of the communion of saints.

Now, whosoever does receive the public sign, seal, bond, and engagement of a society, does thereby publicly declare and avouch himself to be of that society: but, by partaking of the sacrament, the partakers do take on the public sign of the communion of saints: therefore, &c.

Use. I draw some practical inferences from this doctrine.

I. There is a very near and special particular relation amongst the partakers of the sacraments, visibly constitute by their joint partaking of them. They do thereby declare themselves to be of one body, the head whereof is Jesus Christ: even baptism alone constitutes this special relation, 1 Cor. xii. 13. for by that holy sign the baptized are distinguished from those without the visible church, and have all given up their names to Christ. Much more does the receiving of the Lord's-Supper also, as saith the text.

As for the invisible real members of the communion of saints, *i. e.* the real members of the invisible church, God alone certainly knows them in particular.

ticular. But the visible members of it are saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their habitual practice, Rom. i. 7. 1 Theff. i. 5. 'Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.' Amongst these there is a special relation, as one visible body of Christ; those who are only baptized, though they may be complete members of the invisible body, being only incomplete members of the visible; and such as partake of the sacrament of the supper, complete ones, as admitted unto all external privileges of the communion of saints even to the highest of them, which is that of the Lord's table. And therefore there is a more full relation among communicants than others. Hence I would say,

1. Ye who are baptized, yet openly wicked and profane, or grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, being come to years, are apostates in effect, having by your way visibly cut off yourselves from the communion of saints. For in your infancy you were baptized into that one body, but now by your unholy lives ye openly declare yourselves to be none of it, and have taken on the devil's mark, and declare yourselves to be of the world, lying in wickedness, Rom. ii. 25. To you I say,

(1.) Have ye not thus openly rejected communion with God, that you may maintain communion with the world? If you will have nothing ado with the family of heaven, do ye not renounce the Father of it for your father? If you will be none of Christ's mystical body, do ye not refuse him for a head? Yea, sure, 1 John i. 3.

2. Had it not been better for you, if ye repent not, to have lived and died among Pagans, where the name of Christ was never heard, than to have been baptized into one body with the saints, and yet cast off by your openly profane life? 2 Peter ii. 21. 'For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to

‘ to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.’

2. Ye who are saints by profession, yet only baptized, not partakers of the Lord’s table, why do ye continue so? Who is there that values a communion of society, and does not endeavour to partake of all the privileges thereof, that may be of use to them? And if ye have any value for the communion of saints, why do ye not lay out yourselves to be one bread with them? Sift your consciences before the Lord, and it will not be excused from contempt of communion with Christ; with his mystical body, and the means thereof.

3. Ye who are saints by profession, and both baptized and partakers of the Lord’s table, your external privilege is great; ye stand visibly related to the communion of saints, as visible members thereof. What a sad miss will it be if you fail of real membership, and all your interest in it be but shew and pretences, as it will be, if ye be not real saints? It will be a poor plea at the great day, Luke xiii. 26. ‘ We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou has taught in our streets.

(1.) The society ye are visible apparent members of is the mystical body of Christ, enriched with the highest special privileges of communion with the holy Trinity, to their eternal happiness. It will be a sad matter for you to cheat yourselves with a shew and semblance only of partaking with them, with the empty name, while you have nothing of the thing, Gal. vi. 13. ‘ For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

(2.) Ye are not far from the kingdom of God; will ye lose it for not going forward the other step, the main step? Ye have gone through the several gates of the outer court of religion, the door of the inner court stands open to you. Will you not enter in there where the great glory of the house lies?

2 Tim.



2 Tim. iii. 7. The form of godliness will carry you all the length ye have gone in these externals; but the power of it is necessary to evidence you a real member of that body.

(3.) Ye will lose your good company e're long, if you get not a surer holding than mere visible membership; if ye be not bound up with them by the spirit of holiness dwelling in you as in them, the external bands of the sacrament will not do. John xv. 2. 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.'

1<sup>st</sup>, Ye may fall, 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. out from among them, while you live, by apostasy, losing your fair leaves of a profession, as well as fruit, 1 John ii. 19. 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.'

2<sup>dly</sup>, Ye will certainly be separated from among them at death, Psal cxxv. 5. and at judgment, Mat. xxv. 32.

4. Ye who are real saints, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and partakers of the invisible Bread, as well as of the visible bread in the Lord's-Supper, and the outward baptism, happy are ye in the thorough relation you have with the communion of the saints. Ye are members of it to all intents and purposes, true and real members of the mystical body of Christ, who can express the happiness of this privilege! I name only these,

(i.) Ye have past the gulf as to condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Ye are set beyond the reach of the condemning law: the curse is removed, and ye have got your Father's blessing, and ye shall be blest for time and eternity.

(2.) Ye are most honourably related, of the blood royal of heaven, since ye are of the mystical body of Christ. Christ's Father is your Father, John xx. 17. 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Himself is your Head, Eph. i.

22, 23. His Spirit is the bond of your mystical union with him, Eph. iv. 4. The church is your mother, and ye are her true and genuine children, Gal. iv. 26. The glorified saints are your grown brethren, come to their full stature, and ye are the little ones of the same family, Eph. iii. 15. Ay, and the angels too are so, Rev. xix. 10. All these fall to you by that membership.

(3.) Ye are infinitely enriched, for on that society, whereof ye are members, all things are settled by the God of all, 1 Cor. iii. 21. — *All things are yours.* The purchase of the Head belongs to the members, and they have a title to all, and possess all, in their Head, Col. ii. 10. So ye are heirs of the world to come, heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 17. The covenant is your charter, the sacraments the seals of it.

(4.) Ye are perfectly secured, ye shall never perish, come what will come, John iii. 16. ‘ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Christ’s natural body saw no corruption, even in a grave, and Christ’s mystical body cannot perish, nor any member of it, John xiv. 19. — ‘ Because I live, ye shall live also.’ Ye are secured against,

(1.) Falling off. The tree-leg may fall off from the body, but the live-leg cannot: so hypocrites may fall away totally and finally, but the believer cannot, because a living member of Christ’s body, John x. 28. ‘ I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’ A saint may fall down into a mire, he may fall back, but never fall off, nor fall away.

(2.) Cutting off. It is true, a child of God, as to his spiritual state, may be sick and sore; he may be bruised, wounded, and broken at such a rate, that he is of little or no use for the head or the body, but paining and bringing grief to both; and so think  
he

he is cut off, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. 'Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.' But no man will ever yield to the cutting off a member of his body, while it is in his power to cure it: and therefore, soasmuch as no case of a saint is beyond the reach of the great Physician's skill, be their case what it will, they shall be cured at length, but never cut off.

3. Dying off. Spiritual death can never overtake them again; the infinite Spirit, the bond of the union, will always preserve the communication betwixt the head and the members, John xiv. 19. And temporal death cannot dissolve the union; though it separate betwixt soul and body, each of them still remains united to Christ, 1 Theff. iv. 14. All these things are sealed by the sacrament.

II. The sacramental declaration is a matter of such weight, as deserves the deepest impression in one's spirit, and the tenderest regard in one's life, for all time thereafter. What that is ye have already heard, viz. a solemn declaration made by one's partaking, that he is of the communion of the saints, joined with them into one mystical body of Christ. This is the declaration you made by your act of partaking, and this is what, I say, deserves the deepest impression, &c. This will be clear, if ye consider,

1. The subject-matter of that declaration, which is most important. It concerns the mystical body of Christ, and their joining themselves unto it. Is it possible that one can have a weightier matter than that in hand? Does not eternity depend upon it? heaven or hell hang upon it to thy soul. Can any rational man think that to be a matter for one to play with, not to be in deepest earnest about it!

2. The parties to whom it is made, God and all the saints. The Lord has erected the saints into a society under Christ the alone Head, they have their patent in heaven, and God has endowed them with

the richest privileges. He sends out the gospel-proclamation, inviting all to join them, and offering them admission into it freely, withal making the partaking of the sacraments to be their declaration of entering into it, 1 Cor. xii. 13. So it is evident the partaker, by his action, says unto God, Isa xliv. 5. *I am the Lord's*---and to all the saints, Zech. viii. 23. 'We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.' If ye think light of making that declaration to them, do but consider the day when the Lord and all his saints shall judge the world, and call you to an account of the declaration made to themselves.

3. The nature of that declaration. It is not indeed verbal, but real; not by words, but by an action, but that instituted by Christ, and so interpreted by him as importing what it was designed to signify. As it is sacramental, it is of the nature of an oath, wherein God is invoked as Judge and Witness of the sincerity of your declaration. So that ye have in effect sworn yourselves of the communion of saints. And that is weighty.

4. The solemnity of it. It was not a business huddled up in secret, but done openly. The sacraments are public actions of their own nature: and therefore our church has wrestled against private baptism and private communion. Ye were, I suppose, baptized in presence of the church, a lesser or greater number present. Ye did communicate in the Lord's-Supper in the face of the sun, and before many witnesses, in a most solemn manner. It was a very solemn covenanting betwixt God and Abram, Gen. xv. 9,---18. And your covenant-declaration was over the broken body and shed-blood of Christ, represented in the sacrament: What greater solemnity could there be?

5. The amount of it. If ye do not sincerely cleave to it, but in your practice cast it behind your back, it will amount to a lie made to God himself, and  
to



to all his saints, in a matter of the utmost weight, with the greatest solemnity, yea, to the guilt of perjury in effect. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for a lie made in the matter of the price of their land: what will be the punishment of a lie made with such solemnity to God, over the broken body of his son? Matt. xxiv. 46. 'He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, compared with Jer. xxxiv. 18,---20. 'I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant,-- which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof.' 'I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life. Wherefore,

1. Reflect on, and seriously consider what ye have avouched solemnly in partaking of the sacraments. Think on the action deeply, and the import of it, and impress it on your spirits. Look back all of you to your baptism.

Consider, that, in your baptism, ye were given up to Christ, to lay hold on him by faith, Acts xix. 4. That therein ye declared and avouched your putting on Christ, Gal. iii. 2. 'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Your dying to sin and living to righteousness, Rom. vi. 3, 4. 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead,---even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Your being of the mystical body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 13. 'For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body.' If people would seriously consider the import of their baptism, they, who think themselves loose by their not being communicants, would see they are bound already: and that they do but cheat themselves in thinking, by the neglect of the supper, to keep off these hands, which they are already

ready firmly under : the which, if they regard not, they will hear of it afterwards to their cost.

Look back, communicants, to your partaking: Consider what ye have done. Ye have declared yourselves well pleased with the device of salvation through a crucified Christ, your taking of him to be your Head and Ruler, your joining yourselves to him by faith as lively members of his mystical body ; that you are no more henceforth to be of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, but for the Lord only, wholly, and for ever ; to take your part with the saints in the world, whatever your lot be, Psal. xlv. 10. Ye have said all this, and in effect sworn it, over the broken body and shed blood of Christ, before angels and men.

Ye would do well to take some time alone to reflect on this, and to revive the impressions. We find the saints making such reflections, and putting themselves in mind of what they have done in such a case, Psal. xvi. 2. ' O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. And Psal. cxix. 57, 106. ' I have sworn, and I will perform it--that I will keep thy righteous judgments.'

2. Never forget it. Jer. l. 5. People use not to forget their marriage day, and the transactions of it. But, alas ! the declared marriage-consent to Christ is often forgotten, notwithstanding of the solemnity at it, Jer. ii. 32. ' Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire ? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.' They are men of prostituted consciences, who forget their oaths, and have wrought themselves clean of the impressions of them. But, alas ! there are many, who sometimes made this solemn declaration, who seem to have quite forgot it, and the impressions are razed. But have ye forgot it ? God hath sworn he will never forget it, Amos viii. 7. ' The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. See Jer. ii. 2.'

3. Remember it afresh on particular occasions, and beware of spirits with it, when temptations offer to cause you to go against it. Remember it as Jephthah did his vow, Judges xi. 35. 'I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.'

(1.) When your old lusts come back, and fawn on you. No doubt they will come, but deny them, 1 Peter i. 14. 'As obedient children, not fashioned yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance. Remember ye have solemnly declared against them, of your own accord, and to go back to them must be to go over the belly of God's bands on you.'

(2.) When your old companions in sin would draw you aside with them, then say, as Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Remember ye are not of their communion, but have solemnly renounced it, and have embodied with the saints. Is it not a very good reason not to serve the devil with men, because ye are not of the communion of his servants and society.'

4. Do not retract it. It is too solemn and weighty a business to eat in again, Prov xx. 25. 'It is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry, Eccl. v. 5. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.' Some poor wretches expressly retract and renounce their sacramental vows, giving themselves to Satan. Many practically retract their sacramental declaration; particularly,

(1.) By slighting the renewing of it, when the Lord puts an occasion of it in their hands. Thus many baptized persons never set themselves to partake of the Lord's table: some that have partaked of it sometime, leave it off again. Does not this plainly say, that if they had that to do which is done in that matter, it should not be done for them now? And is not that retracting practically, Luke ix. 62. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Lot's wife's rueful looking back was dear to her.

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(2.) By the living a loose and licentious life, as if one had never come under bonds to be the better. Titus i. 16. The language of the conversation of many is, 'Let us break their bands, &c. O that such would consider, Heb. x. 39. 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.'

*Lastly*, Beware of every thing unsuitable to it. Ye have declared yourselves of the communion of saints, do nothing unsuitable to that communion, and your own solemn declaration: Let not the way of God be evil spoken of through your unsuitable walk, Rom. ii. 24, Always remember your character as professed members of the communion of saints, and walk accordingly.

III. Separation from the men in the world lying in wickedness, and fixed standing off from the communion of sinners, is the necessary duty of all saints by profession, and particularly of communicants. Numb. 23. 9. 'The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.' 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15-----17. 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?—Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord.'

I. Whereto this holy separation extends itself.

1. *Negatively*, It doth not extend,

(1.) To the casting off the duties of natural affections and relations to them, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. 'If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away,' &c. Religion doth not weaken, but purify and strengthen natural affection, Rom. ix. 3. and the nearer that sinners stand related unto saints, they will have, and ought to have the greater concern for them, both for their spiritual and temporal good.

(2.) Not

(2.) Not to the casting off civil converse with the men of the world, according as one has the call of providence thereto, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. 'I wrote unto you—not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world.' The saints are not shut up in a corner of the world by themselves, and therefore must needs have civil society with the men of this world. Neither doth religion divest Christians of humanity, or give them a liberty to be rude and indiscreet to others: but obliges them to *live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. To *honour them*, 1 Peter ii. 17. To be courteous, chap. iii. 8, 9.

(3.) Nor to the hindering of us to do them all the good we can. Nay, religion obligeth us to seek their good, 1 Tim. ii. 1. 'I exhort, therefore, that —supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,' and to do good to their souls and bodies, as we have opportunity, Gal. vi. 10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men.'

(4.) Nor to the refusing to serve God, and worship him with them, according to his own institution. This our Saviour himself did, Luke iv. 16. 'And he came to Nazereth—and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.' Thus did the apostles also with the Jews. Thus, in all congregations of saints in the world, there are readily found some who have no appearance of saintship, whom yet they do not so shun as to refuse to worship God with them in his own way.

2. *Positively*, It extends to, and consists in,

(1) Shunning all unnecessary society and familiarity with them, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and will

‘ will not sit with the wicked.’ They are not to be chosen for our companions of converse, or friendship, far less for companions of life, where we can have a choice, but we are to be companions of those that fear the Lord. The company of sinners has been fatal to many, Prov. xiii. 20 ‘ He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.’ Men of the same employment, or that are going to one place, draw together: and should not Christians draw to Christians? It is sad to make Christian congregations and families, like Noah’s ark, a receptacle for clean and unclean, 1 Cor. xv, 33. ‘ Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.’

(2.) Nonconformity to the world, Rom. xii. 2. ‘ And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ Ye must have another manner of life and conversation than they, if ye be of the communion of saints. It is a disgrace to religion, for men of the world to have it to say of a saint by profession, ‘ Behold the man is as one of us.’ Make them not your rule, your example, nor do you think to stamp an offensive way into a lawful one, by the authority of the multitude. For the multitude is in the way to destruction, Matth. vii. 13. ‘ Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;’ and their principles are lax, and their practice licentious: they look on tenderness as niceness and preciseness, and wonder that you cannot take the same liberty they do, 1 Peter iv. 4. ‘ Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.’ But look you to God’s word for your way, and see yourselves obliged to separate from them in your manner of life. See the general rule, Philip. iv. 8. ‘ Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things



‘ things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’

(3.) Refusing communion with them in sin, Prov. i. 10. ‘ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.’ Every man is for his own master’s interest, and therefore they are for bringing you over into the service of the devil their master, as you will be for bringing them to Christ, if you be real Christians. Beware of fellowship with them in sin, Eph. v. 11. ‘ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.’ Do not homologate their sinful courses by approving or consenting any manner of way thereto, far less by actual joining with them in their sin, Psalm l. 18. It is an affront to heaven, but a pleasure to hell, to see Christ’s sheep and the devil’s goats yoked together in one sinful course. Nay, communicants, thou shouldst be like the ermine, that will by no means pass over the mud, that would stain its precious furr.

(4.) Refusing communion with them in the worship of God, in a false way, or even in a right way, upon sinful terms. The saints must separate from all false worship, that is, worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixed with human inventions and ordinances, Revel. xviii. 4. Nay, where the worship is pure, but some sinful thing is imposed upon you as a term of communion with the worshippers, you must refuse communion with them in worship on these terms, Rom. iii. 8. In these cases separation is not only lawful, but a necessary duty. And could I perceive either of these this day, in our case, in the communion of this church, I should not only think it my duty to separate, but also to press you to it. But though our mother has gone far back, she has not gone that length yet.

II. Reasons of this separation. Because,

1. The communion of saints and the communi-  
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on of sinners are opposite societies, 1 John v. 19. 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' So that joining to the one particularly infers separation from the other. You may as well imagine to bring east and west together, to make fire and water agree, as to make God's family and the devil's to agree; the seed of the woman and serpent. Wherefore, having joined to the communion of saints, ye must needs separate from the communion of sinners, Matth. vi. 24 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

2. The communion of saints is gathered out of the world lying in wickedness; so that separation from the world is wrapt up in the very constitution of the society of saints, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.' The mystical body of Christ is made up of those that were sometimes limbs of the devil: the branches ingrafted into the true vine were all broken off from our natural stock, the old Adam, that degenerate, dead and killing stock: Christ's family of mankind is wholly made up of run aways from the devil's family, Psal xlv. 10. So that if ye be saints at all, ye are separatists.

3. The design of erecting the communion of saints is, that they may be a separate society by themselves, under Christ their Head, to his honour, Numbers xxiii. 9. Eph. v. 25, — 27. They are a peculiar people, 1 Peter. ii. 9. How will they answer the design of their erection, and the honour of their head, if they be not thus a separate people? Our Lord Christ has appointed badges of this communion, viz. the sacraments, to be external signs of distinction betwixt his and the world: and can it be thought but they will distinguish themselves by their practice.

4. The profession of saintship is the profession of this separation, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Let baptized persons and communicants be ashamed to say they do not pretend to be saints. If ye pretend not to be saints, renounce your pretensions to heaven, for none other come there, Heb. xii. 14. 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.' If ye pretend not to be saints, ye must own yourselves apostates, that have renounced and cast off the communion of saints. And, communicants, if ye pretend not to be saints, how durst ye adventure to sit down at the Lord's table? Well, in so far as ye were baptized, and communicated, ye professed yourselves members of Christ's body, saints, and so separate from the world: therefore ye must live separate from them.

Wherefore, I say unto all saints by profession, and particularly communicants,—'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' Acts ii. 40. 2 Cor. vi. 17. 18. Shun all unnecessary society with those of the world lying in wickedness, conform not to their ways, have no communion with them in sin, nor in the service of God in sinful terms. Remember ye have solemnly declared yourselves of another communion than with them.

*Motive 1.* Consider the authority of God that binds this upon you, Eph. v. 7, 8, 11. 'Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' The men and women of the world are separated from God, Eph. ii. 12. They are walking contrary to him; and therefore he will have you to separate from them, and be as a *people dwelling alone*, in the midst of the world's throng, because they are not of your communion.

2. The proof of the sincerity of your pretensions to saintship depends very much on it, Psal. xvi. 2. 3.—

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‘ My goodness extendeth not to thee ; but to the saints  
 ‘ that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom  
 ‘ is all my delight.’ See also Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. and xv.

4. It is evident men will chuse such company as is most agreeable, in their opinion, to their own temper and disposition—And so one may very well guess at the disposition of a person by the company he chuses and delights in. And if thou art inclined to be a companion of the graceless, rather than of the gracious, it is a shrewd sign of a graceless heart.

3. The honour of God lies at stake here, Rom. ii. 24. If thou dost wear Christ’s badge, and yet will not separate from the communion of sinners but go with them in their way, religion will be wounded through thy sides, and exposed to the mockery of profane men, and there are particularly three communions of sinners I would warn you against, as ye would not stab religion to the heart.

(1.) The communion of drunkards. O how unlike is that to the communion of saints at the Lord’s table ! For the Lord’s sake, communicants, when ye have the temptation, remember that word, 1 Cor. x. 21, 22. ‘ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy ? are we stronger than he.’

(2.) The communion of harlots. That is a communion of sinners in an eminent manner, most inconsistent with the communion of saints, from which the apostle argues against it, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17. ‘ Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ, shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of an harlot ? God forbid. What, know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body---But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.’

(3.) The communion of unjust men, in sinful dishonest ways of getting gain. Solomon speaks of this



this, Prov. i. 14, 15. It is dear bought that is got at the rate of God's displeasure.

*Lastly*, If ye separate not from them, ye will perish with them, Rev. xviii 4. If ye partake of their sin, ye must partake of their plagues.

IV. There are certain duties of the communion of saints lying on all the members of it, by virtue of their membership: the which duties all saints by profession, and especially communicants, are solemnly engaged unto by their partaking of the sacraments.

To clear the first part of this inference, consider,

1. Every relation wherein one stands brings along with it a train of duties with respect to one's relatives. Relations are the joints of society, whereby persons are joined together for mutual usefulness; and their union is the ground of this debt they owe to one another. This holds in all relations, natural relations, and voluntary ones too made by consent. If one be a father of children, they are paternal duties lying on him by virtue of that relation: if he be a child of such parents he owes a duty to them. If one become a member of a family, a kingdom, or any corporation, his membership lays him under such and such duties: wherefore it is not to be doubted, but in as much as one is a member of the communion of saints, he is under obligations to the duties of that society.

2. There is a certain connection between privilege bestowed on a man, and duty required of him. If one be admitted to the privilege of any society, he must with the honour receive the burden of duty belonging to it. If we receive the privilege of sons of God, we must be obedient children,--'not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, 1 Peter i. 14. If we are members of the holy society whereof Christ is the Head, we must be holy as he is, ver. 15 16.' But as he who hath called you 'is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. 'Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.' If we be advanced to be of the communion of saints, we must carry as becomes saints,

3. The principal of self-preservation, natural to all men, evidence this. If one be taken with a pain in his foot, all the members of the body will do their best to recover it: for if one member suffer, all suffer, by reason of the union among them, and the evil, if not removed, creeps from one to another. So the apostle will have the saints at Corinth to take heed of a corrupt member, and use the means to recover him, from this principle of self-preservation, 1 Cor. v. 6. They who dwell together find themselves obliged to take heed every one to his neighbour's house, lest when the neighbour's house is on fire, the flames also catch hold of their own: wherefore, whosoever is a member of the communion of saints, must see a duty lying on him as such.

To clear the second part of the inference, consider,

1. By partaking of the sacrament one declares himself to be one of the communion of saints, and consequently declares his being engaged to the duties of that communion, 1 John ii. 6. He voluntarily takes on the yoke, while he yokes himself with those who bear it. If one pretends to the privilege, he cannot in reason shake himself loose of the duty. 'And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke vi. 46.

2. The sacraments are the external bands of our union with Christ the Head, and the members, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Thereby we are sacramentally joined with the saints into one body, one bread. What is the partaking of them, then, less than solemnly, as it were by oath, engaging ourselves to the duties of the communion of saints?

Wherefore, all ye who are saints by profession, particularly communicants, as ye are one visible body of Christ, a visible communion of saints, I would press on you the duties which ly upon you as such. And they are of three sorts. •

I. There are duties ye owe to the Head. Christ is the Head of this body the communion of saints, Eph. i. 22. 23. Ye are the profest members of Christ, and of his body; consider and conscientiously practise your duty to your Head.

1. Acknowledge not, nor own any other for Head of the church or communion of saints, but Jesus Christ, Eph. v. 23. Men may distinguish as they will; but, as a body with more heads than one is a monster in nature, the scripture is plain, the communion of saints, which is the church, is no such monster, Eph. iv. 4, 5. 'One body, one Lord.' The Roman anti-christ has long blasphemously arrogate to himself the headship and supremacy, and, at the lame reformation of England, it was taken from the pope there, but not restored to the royal Mediator, but made a part of their king's royal dignity. And in the days of Scotland's apostasy from their covenanted God, it was sacrilegiously usurped over this church by the powers then reigning, but contended against by the sufferings of many of this church, the Lord having made the Mediator's alone headship and supremacy a peculiar piece of this church's testimony, for which, alas! the present generation has not been duly jealous, the which has helped to bring this church into the miserable pass she is at this day. But why should any pretend to be head of the body of Christ? to be her head, while they cannot communicate life or spirit to her? This is Christ's peculiar prerogative, communicable to no mortal.

2. Depend by faith on Jesus Christ, as your Head for all. He is constitute the Head of that society whereof ye are members, and by virtue of his Headship, their life lies in him, the direction and care of them lies on him.

(1.) Depend on him for vital influences, Col. ii. 19. — 'from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministred, and knit together,

‘ increaseth with the increase of God.’ The believer’s life lies in him, Col. iii. 3.—‘ your life is hid with Christ in God.’ Therefore it cannot be lost, John xiv. 19.—‘ because I live ye shall live also.’ The church is liable to great decays; she may be under a spiritual consumption, her purse may beat very low, yet the sickness cannot be unto death, because there is still life in the Head, which will be communicate more abundantly to the members. It is our business to live by faith, and draw virtue from him, and not live on our inherent stock of life and grace, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Two things are here to be observed.

(1.) That there is a fulness lodged in Christ as the Head of the body, to be communicated to all the members, Col. i. 19. A fulness of a fountain which has not only enough for itself, but those that come to draw. There is a fulness of merit in him, for the life of pure pardon and comfort, and refreshment for the soul slain with a sense of guilt: a fulness of spirit for the life of sanctification; and ready access to it for all the members, John i. 16. ‘ And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.’

(2.) The promises are the conduit-pipes by which influences of grace run into us, and faith is the drawing grace by which they are brought into the soul, Gal. ii. 20. The settled method of the dispensation of grace is that, ‘ According to thy faith, so be it unto thee.’ Faith believes and applies the promises, and so life more abundantly is conveyed, Hosea xiv. 7.

(2.) Depend upon him for direction, Prov. iii. 5, 6. ‘ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps.’ The direction of the whole body belongs to the head, and the direction and guidance of all the members of Christ to him by virtue of his headship. Therefore,

(1.)



(1.) Take not the guiding of yourselves upon yourselves, trust not to your own wit and skill. If ye do, it is an usurping of Christ's prerogative, Isa. lv. 5. and ye will not prosper in it, but stumble at noon day. Where are the eyes but in the head? and therefore since Christ is the Head of all the saints, he is appointed of the Father to be eyes to them in the wilderness. And the way of carnal wit has been ruining to churches, and particular members. The end of the way, pointed out by it, is always misery.

(2.) Look to him, and trust him for direction in all cases, Prov. iii. 3. God brings his people into a thicket of perplexities, and they are at their wits end, that faith may begin, and wait for a way, when they can see none, Isa. xlii. 16. Then he leads them by his word, providence, and spirit. He is the pilot of the ship bound to Emmanuel's land with all the heirs of glory as passengers; their guide through the wayless wilderness, and they must keep their eye on him.

(3.) Depend on his care, 1 Pet. v. 7. 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' The care of the whole communion of saints lies on Christ as their head, 1 Pet. ii. 25. The Father has given them to him, devolved the care of them upon him, in such sort that he is to be answerable for them, that none of them be lost, John vi. 39. 'And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he has given me, I should lose nothing.'—Thus the hearts of his people may safely trust in him.

(1.) For provision. He, as their head, sees to the provision of their souls, *providing them green pastures, and still waters*, Psal. xxiii. 2. He provides for their bodies, Isa. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.* The faith of Christ's headship might still all anxious thoughts about one's through-bearing in any case whatsoever; for, come what will come, surely the head will ay see to the provision of the members.

(2.) For protection, Eph. v. 23. The saints have many enemies without and within; but, being settled under such a Head, they may be sure of protection in all dangers. They will be ay safe, if not from trouble, yet, in it, John xvi. 33. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' From the sting of it, that it shall do them no real harm, 1 Pet. iii. 13. 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?'

The saints are oft times in a mighty stir, having great cares on their heads; but O how happy would they be, if they would lay their cares all on their mystical head, and be at their duty, and leave them all on him! 'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication—let your requests be made known unto God,' Phil. iv. 6.

3. Subject yourselves wholly to his government, as to your head, Eph. v. 22, 23, 24. The head must rule the body, and Christ must rule you, if you be his members. Coming into the communion of saints, ye resign yourselves to the head of that society, for good and all, for ever.

(1.) Be obedient to his commands, Luke vi. 46. Our Lord Jesus has freed the members of his mystical body from the law as a covenant of works, but with his own hands he binds on them the yoke of obedience to the commands thereof as his own commands, 1 Cor. ix. 21. '---Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.'---What confusion would there be in the natural body, for the head to be directing and pointing out one way, and the members going another? If Christ be your head, be ruled by him, renouncing your own will, and making his your law.

(2.) Resign yourselves to the disposals of his providence, 1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 25. 26. The members of Christ have good reason for an absolute resignation

resignation of themselves and all their concerns to the Lord. The sovereignty of their head may silence them; the wisdom and love of their head to his own members may satisfy them, that whatever he does with them is best done. Their interest is his own, as that of the members is the interest of the head.

4. Let the interests of Jesus Christ, as your head, be your interest, his honour and glory be dear unto you, Psal. lxxix. 9. 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.' All the members of the body are concerned for the head, as the head is for all the members; and whoso are not touched with the care of Christ's honour in the world, give shrewd evidences they are none of his members. Then,

(1.) Act for the honour of your head, in every capacity seeking to advance his glory, Psal. xlv. 17. 'I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.' There is a party in the world opposite to Christ, and they act against him. He has been going among us, saying, Who is on my side? and ye, by professing your submission to him, and declaring yourselves sacramentally to be of the communion of saints, have solemnly gone over to his side. Then act for him, his truths, and his ways; act for him in your families, in your neighbourhoods, wherever ye have access, whoever they are that act against him.

(2) Be ready to suffer for him, as he may call you. Remember the communion of which ye have declared yourselves members, is, in this world, like a lily among thorns, which will be uneasy to them; and ye were warned of what is expected of all the members, Luke xiv. 26. In such a long time of peace, it is no wonder many limbs of the devil have got in among Christ's members, and many a hollow-hearted sinner is externally got into the communion of saints, and the saints, by this time, are much the worse of their company; and between  
foolish

foolish virgins, and sleeping wise ones, the interest of Christ and religion is going to decay. So that the case of the church, in the common course of providence, seems to preface such a trying stroke as will awaken living members, and make many dead lifeless member fly off. But if Christ be your Head, ye will be so minded as to suffer for him in his strength: ye know, nothing is more natural, than when a stroke is directed against one's head, to lift up one's arm to ward off the blow from the head. The rage of enemies is against Christ himself, and to quit Christ, and go over to their side, is the way many take in such a day. But the real members of Christ's body take not that way, more than a man will put out his head to keep off a stroke designed against his arm, the head being that which all the members will take special care of. In the mean time,

(3.) Suffer with him, Psalm lxix 9. If the members suffer, the head suffers with them; and if the head be pained, all the body suffers with it; such is the sympathy. If Christ's members suffer, he sympathizeth with them, Acts ix. 4. And it is reasonable that they who think to reign with Christ after, suffer with him now. This is a day wherein the glorious Head of the mystical body is suffering egregiously amongst us, and wherein all his members are called to mourn as suffering with him, Psal. cxix. 136. 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.' Our Head suffers from his open enemies, is wounded in the house of his friends, is suffering from professors, and profane ministers and people of all ranks. Happy they who shall be found mourning for the dishonours done to his name, truths, ways, &c. they are like to be hid in the day he rises up to resent the affronts.

*Lastly,* Take care of yourselves for the sake of your Head. The follies of a wife reflect dishonour on her husband. Men will take care of their feet, for that, if they catch cold in them, it will fly up



to their head. O saints by profession, communicants, remember that from the day you gave up your names to Christ, and declare yourselves of the communion of saints, the honour of Christ is concerned in your walk at another rate than ever before. Your sins have a peculiar aggravation in them of dishonour to your Head, Rom. ii. 24. 'For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles thro' you.' Therefore, if ye have any respect to the honour of Christ, take heed that your conversation be as becometh the gospel.

II. There are duties ye owe to the body in general, the mystical body of Christ, which is the communion of saints, Eph. i. 22, 23. Ye are professed members of this body, whereof Christ is the head; and this body is not confined to one particular church, but is made up of all the churches of Christ, and particular saints through the world, united to Christ by his spirit dwelling in them. Consider and practise the duties to this body, lying on you by virtue of your membership.

I. Sympathize with the body, as being yourselves of it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.'—The concerns of the church of Christ through the world should be the concern of every member. Distance of place, and differences in lesser things among those of the mystical body of Christ, should not take away this concern. Whosoever are allowed a place in Christ's mystical body should have room allowed them in our hearts.

(1.) Mourn with the body under its affliction and evils. Such a kindly member was Nehemiah, chap. ii. 3. The distressed of foreign churches, as well as of our own, require our cordial sympathy; and the saints are naturally led to it, as knit to them with one common head.

(2.) Rejoice with it in its prosperity, 1 Cor. xii. 26. 'And whether—one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' The thriving of the kingdom

kingdom of Christ, in any place through the world, should be refreshful to all the members of Christ, and fill their mouths with praises. To bear a part in the joys and moans of the church of Christ every where, is the natural duty of all the members.

2. Pray continually for the welfare of the body, Psal. cxxii. 6. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.' Isa. lxii. 6, 7.—'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' The apostle is express for all saints, Eph. vi. 18. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Confine not your prayers to your own private case, but in all earnestness extend them to the church of Christ in the land where you live, and through the world. Prayer is a duty wherein all the members of Christ on earth can have actual communion; they meet at the throne of grace, who never saw one another's face. It is the petition of all the saints, *Thy kingdom come*. Pray for the building up, increase, peace, and purity of the church universal.

3. Take your lot with the body in foul or fair weather. Ye have said in effect, to this happy society, as Ruth i. 16. Sometimes there is a storm on the church of Christ, when the world, lying in wickedness, enjoys a calm. This occasions many naughty members to change sides, to desert the communion of saints, and fall in with the communion of sinners, 2 Tim. iv. 10. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Ye know not how soon ye may be tried in this point; but do ye resolutely adhere to the mystical body. To move you to which, consider these three things,

(1.) It is safer to be with the saints in their lowest condition, than with sinners in the highest pinnacle of prosperity: for the darkest night with the former will have a joyful morning, Psalm xcvi. 11. while the

the fairest day with the latter will issue in a black and fearful night, Eccles. vii. 5, 6.

(2.) The trial of sincerity of members is one of the great ends of the Lord's bringing trouble on the body, to try who are wise and foolish builders. It is true, when the natural body being sick is laid a-bed, the tree leg is laid by, but all the living members of the body go with it. So, &c.

(3.) Backsliding is dangerous, and speaks one not fit for the kingdom of God, Luke ix. 62. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;' it exposes one to the fearful displeasure of God, Heb. x. 38. 'But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:' and makes their case worse than if they had never set heaven ward.

4. Strive in all lawful ways to maintain and advance the interests of the body; for the interest of the church is the interest of Christ, and dear therefore to every member. The truths of God are a sacred trust committed to the church, the pillar of truth; and they require our deep concern for the defence thereof, against the assaults of error, Jude, verse 3. 'Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' Christ's ordinances and institutions, and the several privileges thereof, which Satan and the world seek to deprive her of and corrupt, they are Christ's purchase for his mystical body; and therefore they are to be held fast, and the purity of them contended for, refusing to subject them or ourselves to the lusts of men, Gal. v. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 23. This will always require doing of us, holding hands to the maintenance of the precious interests of the mystical body, Psalm xlv. 17. and sometimes suffering, Heb. xii. 3, 4. It is a debt we owe to Christ, to the church, to posterity, and to our own souls.

*Lastly*, Be tender to the unity of the body, Eph. iv. 3, 4. 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit,

‘ Spirit in the bond of peace,’ 1 Cor. xii. 25. Schisms, rents, and divisions in the church, are like wounds, cuts, and breaking of bones in the natural body, which exceedingly weaken it, and marr its beauty. They are the sin and judgment of a church, bringing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, marring the success of the gospel, and ruining the church at length: they bring much grief to tender souls, and expose religion to the mockery of enemies. The renting of the body of Christ has so much of horror about it as may make it frightful to serious members. We must separate from none farther than they separate from Christ. We must not go into sin with the members of the mystical body, more than with the world, under the pain of the displeasure of the Head: but we may lawfully serve the Lord in his own ordinances with sinful members; even as though when one foot is in a mire, the other must not go into the mire with it, yet there is no necessity of renting the one leg from the other, but the one may still walk with the other on clean ground.

III. There are duties ye owe to the members in particular, as ye are fellow-members with them of the same body, 1 Cor. xii. 25. ‘ That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.’ It is not in your power to know certainly and infallibly who are real members of this body, as others cannot know the same concerning you; but the visible body of Christ is made up of saints by profession, not openly contradicted by their habitual practice, 1 Cor. i. 2. and as such they are admitted to the Lord’s table, upon their desire.

So there is a particular visible relation among all saints by profession, and particularly among communicants, as visible members of the same mystical body of Christ. And, therefore, though they owe a duty to all men, of love, good-will, and beneficence, yet they are in a particular manner engaged



to dutifulness one to another, as members of the visible communion of saints, separate from the world.

Of this visible body or communion there are two sorts of members, official and simple ones; the former bearing office in the body, the other not so, but private persons; both members of the one body.

1. The official members are the office-bearers in the church, which is the body, and these are pastors, teachers, ruling-elders, and deacons. These are in the mystical body, as in man's natural body are the stomach, bearing the office of provisor for the whole body, the legs of supporters, the eyes of lights to the whole body. And,

The duty of the official members to the rest may be summed up in these two, as they are, Acts xx. 28. *viz.*

(1.) That they take heed to themselves. They must take heed to their feet, that they walk as becomes the gospel, and their office and character: to their tongues, that their doctrines and instructions be sound: and to their hearts, that these be upright, that so both word and walk may be holy. This I reckon a duty they owe to the rest of the members, as well as to themselves: because their holy tender walk is an ordinance of Christ for edifying the body, as well as sound doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 12. 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, 1 Pet. v. 3. 'Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples unto the flock.' And a scandalous unorder practice, in a church officer, wounds not only his own conscience, but does a singular mischief to the church: as a hurt in the eye not only wrongs it, but the whole body.

(2.) That they take heed to the rest of the members over whom they are overseers, conscientiously following the duties of their respective offices in the body. It is not enough that they be good men, in their private capacity; but that they be good ministers, elders, &c. in their public capacity. If the

stomach had never such a good disposition, yet if it keep all the nourishment to itself only, the body would go to ruin: so, if church officers ply not their official duty, the church suffers by them; they are useless, and worse than useless in the place they have in the body.

2. There is also a special duty that the rest of the members owe to the official members of the body. And this also may be summed up in two things:

1. A peculiar concern for them, Gal. iv. 15. 'For I bear record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.' It is evident, nature itself teacheth a peculiar concern for those members which are of the most diffusive usefulness in the natural body, by virtue of their office. Who would not take many thrusts through the leg, e're he received one through the heart? Who will put a toe in the balance with an eye? So, in the mystical body, however selfish many are, yet tender considering Christians will have a peculiar concern for official members.

1. This should proceed from a reverential estimation of them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake.' Their work is great; if they have honour, they have the burden with it. Their work is for the honour of the Head, and the profit of the body: and many a time they are like the candle, which giving light to others, wastes itself. The Master has put an honour on them, and a reverend regard to them, as his officers, is a duty acceptable to God in Christ; yet this respect to them is but civil respect, though the motive is sacred.

2. It should vent itself in these,

(1.) Praying for them seriously, 2 Thess. iii. 1. 'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord

' Lord may have free course, and be glorified.' As their work is great, their needs, temptations, and trials are many. The better it fares with them, it is like to fare the better with you; on the contrary, the worse it fares with them, the worse it will fare with you. So much is your own case wrapt up in theirs. Pinch the stomach with hunger, the plump members of the body will soon fall; let the disorders of it be cured, and the rest of the body will soon feel the good of it. The devil strikes at them, that in them he may strike at the whole congregation: and ministers get not only comforts, but afflictions from the hand of God, for the good of the people, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. Then even help them by your prayers, that bear the burden.

(2.) Supporting of them cordially, 2 Tim. i. 16. ' The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me.' Encourage them in their work, which will be lightening under a heavy burden. Ye should support their credit, and cast a veil over their infirmities, Gal. iv. 14. ' And my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despised not nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus; and not make mole-hills in them; mountains, as many do, who delight to blacken those of that character; unlike a kindly member of the body, which will not spread, but endeavour to cure the weakness of an official member. And by divine right the rest owe them a competent maintenance, according to their ability, 1 Cor. ix. 14. ' Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

3. A ready compliance with them in the work of their office; as the body goes whither the eyes direct, and the legs carry. An implicate faith and blind obedience is due to no man; but the mind of the Lord held out by official members to the rest, is to be readily complied with, as they would not incur the displeasure of the Head, 1 Thes. ii. 13. ' For this cause

‘ also thank we God without ceasing, because, when  
 ‘ ye received the word of God which ye heard of us,  
 ‘ ye received it not as the word of man, but (as it is  
 ‘ in truth) the word of God, which effectually work-  
 ‘ eth also in you that believe!’

1. Imitate them, and follow their steps so far as they follow Christ. ‘ Be ye therefore followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,’ 1 Cor. xi. 1. ‘ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample,’ Phil. iii. 17. It is a part of the work of their office to be examples to the flock: and if that be a divine ordinance, for the edification of the church, surely the rest of the members are obliged to follow the example; and if they do not, their practice so far as it is holy, as well as their doctrine, will be a witness against them. This is a point but little regarded. Many will tell how church-officers should walk, that never once look on themselves as obliged to follow their steps in the way of holiness: but the way of holiness is but one to ministers and people, though many are ready to make two of them, and take the broadest to themselves.

2. Submit to their instructions, admonitions, exhortations, &c. Heb. xiii. 17. ‘ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.’ What confusion would be in the natural body, if the members would not be guided by the light of the eye, or refuse the nourishment prepared by the stomach? So unnatural is it for the members of the mystical body to be refractory to the official members in the discharge of their duty, to refuse their wholesome instructions, and to be satisfied without receiving benefit of ordinances dispensed by them.

O learn to look on ministers, and other church-officers, as standing in this capacity and relation to the body whereof ye are members. Consider them as members of the same mystical body with yourselves, and as official members, in whose welfare and regular discharge



discharge of their office, your own welfare is wrapt up. This would,

(1.) Make you modestly and Christianly concerned that they may do their duty to the edification of the body, Psalm cxxxii. 9. For people to treat their ministers imperiously and disrespectfully, and superciliously dictate to them how to behave in the exercise of their office, as many do, and value themselves upon it, is an argument of pride and emptiness, of mens forgetting themselves, and regardlessness of that order which Christ, the Head, has appointed in his mystical body. But for people in a modest, serious, and Christian way, to excite their ministers to their duty, to inform and advise them of what may contribute to their carrying on the Lord's work most successfully, as the Lord's word gives them warrant to do it, Col. iv. 17. and their own soul's interest in the matter gives them a right to it; so a godly minister would bless God for having such an advantage. Are not all the members concerned for the eye, stomach, &c. in the natural body? But do they fall a beating of them, or overcharging them, that they may do their office? No, but with all tenderness to them they endeavour to enable them to do their respective offices.

2. It would put you on a conscientious performance of your duty to them, your own soul's interest engaging you thereto, 1 Theff. v. 12. The fable of the members conspiring against the belly, to pinch it by withholding of food, and being forced to give it over by reason that they themselves suffered by that means, may represent to us, as in an emblem, the folly of a people undutiful to their ministers, to their own soul's great loss. The relation is so very near, that undutifulness on either hand must be hurtful to both.

II. The simple members are such as are not office-bearers in the body, but private Christians: These owe a duty, one to another, as members of the same mystical body. They are the visible members of the

body of Christ, and so obliged to a native care for one another, 1 Cor. xii. 25. 'That the members should have the same care one for another.' This extends to all such Christians, through the world, as we have occasion to do this duty towards; but in a special manner it is to be exercised towards those with whom we live in actual church-communion, and partakers of the Lord's-supper together, are in a special manner under this obligation. As ye are one bread and one body, so I would exhort you to make conscience of the duties ye owe to one another as such.

Communicants are a separated body from others, distinguished from others, by the most solemn badge of the Christian profession: O! if they would carry themselves as a people separated from the world to Jesus Christ, and joined together for him in one body, then would we see the benefit of communions, to the honour of Christ, and the success of the gospel, and the good of their own souls.

The church is a society gathered out of the world, visibly joined together by the use of the sacraments; though they are in the world they are not of it; and all the members of it should be a people dwelling alone, though in the midst of others, not reckoned among the nations. The truth is, there are many baptized in their infancy, who openly go over to the world's side; but all ye who are saints by profession, and particularly communicants, as ye profess yourselves to be of one body, and owe a Christian duty to them that are without: so I would lay before you the duties ye owe one to another, by virtue of your being visible members of one and the same body.

THE Love one another affectionately and sincerely, John xv. 12. 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.' To walk rightly in Christian communion, we must walk in love, Eph. v. 2. Ye ought to love all men, being ready to desire their good, and do them all the good ye can; but ye owe brotherly love to all the visible members

members of Christ's body, which is so often recommended to the followers of Christ, 1 Theff. iii. 12. 'And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you.' Rom. xii. 10. 'Be kindly affectionated one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.' O what an inconsistency is there in sitting down at the Lord's table together, the table of love, and the hearts of the partakers never united in love.

*Object.* There are some so naughty in their way and manner of life, that it is hard to love them with brotherly love.

*Answer.* The decay of love among the professors of Christianity is most visible at this day; and I must say I despair of seeing due love among church members restored, as long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world, and until the church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church. God separated them in the late times by the fire of persecution, and then this love flamed among them: Peace being restored, the church even mixed again with the world lying in wickedness, and that love died out of course. And while all are acknowledged as church-members, few, very few, are loved as such. The New Testament churches, though there were many hypocrites in them, yet they seem to have been constituted of visible saints, saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their practices, Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 2. 1 Theff. v. 5. But more directly to the objection.

It is plain that brotherly love is to be proportioned to the degrees of the divine image discernible in any. And therefore, (1.) where nothing of it appears, but people are openly wicked, we owe not this brotherly love to them: and every member of the church, private Christians as well as church officers, should endeavour that they partake not of that one bread in the sacrament. But, (2.) since the best are  
not

not free of some evils hanging about them, even to the discerning of others, we ought not to refuse brotherly love to any in whom any lineaments of God's image appears, though they have several things in their way altogether unlovely. It is the work of grace here to pick the pearl of grace out of a dunghill of sinful qualities, and to love the person for it, drawing a veil over many sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8. 'And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' And not to aggravate the ills about them, so as to hide their good from our eyes. Wo unto us if God should treat us so, yea, or the saints; wherefore love one another.

*Motive 1.* It is the principle of the duties of church-communion, therefore called the 'bond of perfection' in the church, Col. iii. 2, 13, 14. In the primitive church they were most dutiful one to another; see the source of it, Acts iv. 32. 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.'—Where it prevails, it will make every one concerned for the good of his fellow-Christian, as for his own: where it is not, people, though in church-communion, will be ready to say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' So, the want of it turns all loose.

2. It is a badge of sincerity, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life: because we love the brethren,' 1 John iii. 14. And without it we cannot prove ourselves true Christians, neither to ourselves, nor to the world of on-lookers, John xiii. 35. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. For love to God will produce love to all those who bear his image.'

3. It is the most natural result of the love of Christ to us, John xiii. 34. 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' Never was there such love as that of Christ to his people in his dying for them: this shed abroad in the heart must needs make a loving disposition to him, and all that belong to him for his sake.

*Leahy*



*Lastly*, The near relation in which the followers of Christ stand to one another, plead for it. They are fellow members of the same body, joined together under one head, are members of one heavenly family, shall dwell together for evermore in heaven, and are joint objects of the world's hatred.

2. Bear with one another's weaknesses, failures and infirmities. This has many branches, see Col. iii. 12, 13. 'Put on therefore (as the elect of God 'holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, 'humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, 'if any man has a quarrel against another; even as 'Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' Be of a meek, patient, forbearing and forgiving temper, as to all men, so particularly to the members of the body of Christ, your fellow-members, and that because they are so. When we come to heaven we will have nothing to bear with; but till we come there, we will have occasion to exercise this grace towards others, and others towards us, since every one has their own imperfections, and there is not one to cast a stone at another on this score.

It is sad to see how easily professors are brought to cast at one another, how they cannot bear the least provocation, cannot forgive nor forget injuries; yea, many there are who rejoice in the failure of others, and are glad when they get an ill tale of them, or see some false step made by them which they improve to run them down, and to the judging of their state. But consider, I pray you,

(1.) How the Lord bears with you, Eph. iv. 32. 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath 'forgiven you.' O what would come of us, if God would bear no more with us than we can bear with our fellow-servants! Dreadful would the measure be, if God should meet to us as we often do to our fellow Christians. Does the Spirit of the Lord suffer us long, and will not we learn long-suffering? Are we

we forgiven talents, and will we not forgive a few pence?

(2.) How the Lord bears with them. He overlooks many things in his people, tho' he does not approve of them. Shall not this example draw us to imitation?

3. Do not we ourselves stand in need of forbearance and forgiveness from others, Eccl. vii. 21; 22. 'Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.' And every day in hazard of being led aside with temptation, Gal. iv. 1. 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.' Why should we then so forget ourselves, as not to allow to others what we need from them?

*Lastly*, Is not your interest in the matter, since you are of the body with them. When one hand labours under any sore, does not the other tenderly dress it, and even 'these members of the body, which we think less honourable, do not we bestow abundant honour on them,' 1 Cor. xii. 23. So should we be ready to cast a veil of love over the infirmities of our brethren.

3. Watch over one another. Heb. x. 24. 'And let us consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works: And xii. 15. 'Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' This is one of the principal duties of church communion, and, if duly managed, would be of notable use for the honour of the Head, and blood of the body. It is true, the Lord has appointed some watchmen, by office, in his church: but the law of love among the members of the mystical body, and the appointment of the Head, makes also every one watchman over another.

I mean not to encourage men to a censorious prying into other mens matters, malicious searching into the faults of others, to get something whereupon to make them odious. There are abundance of these who are spies from the devil's camp, improving their discoveries, fancied or real, to the dishonour of religion; and wounding the reputation of the brethren. But that, with an eye of love; you would observe one another's walk, for your mutual advantage, to imitate what is lovely in one another, and endeavour to mend what is amiss, to prevent it. I take it under these following things :

(1.) Excite and stir up one another to a holy tender walk, in the several parts or duties of it, Heb. x. 24. Every member of the body should be a spur to another, to quicken his pace in the way of duty: so far should they be from being hindrances to, and clogs upon one another. All of us have a principle of sloth in us, which disposes us to flag and sink in our endeavours after holiness; and happy they who have a fellow-Christian to quicken them by word and example, Prov. xxvii. 17. 'Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.'

(2.) Warn one another of snares in your way, as fellow-travellers towards Zion, 1 Thes. v. 14. 'Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.' One may see a snare before another, he is not aware of that is in the greatest hazard of it; and it is a piece of Christian-duty to warn one of it. This is to blow the trumpet as a watchman, the trumpet of private warning, the which if he does not, he is guilty of the sin his brother falls into as not preventing it.

3. Confirm the staggering, and labour to bear up him who is ready to fall, 1 Thes. v. 14. 'Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak.' O what a substantial kindness did Abigail to David, in preventing the sin he was slipping into! An enemy is to be helped to raise up his ass lying under a burden, Exod.

Exod. xxiii. 5. that he may not lose it; how much more, when one sees his brother under a weight of temptation, is he to help him above it? like to be carried away with a stream, is he to catch hold of him, and do his best to draw him out?

*Lastly*, Admonish and reprove one another, in a spirit of meekness, for what is amiss, Rom. xv. 14. 2 Thess. iii. 15. Eph. v. 11. The infirmity cleaving to the best, with the variety of snares lying in our way, occasions every one sometimes to go wrong: and though it is easy to step aside, it is not so easy to recover, and come into the way again. This makes admonition necessary. There is a corrupt principle of self-love in us, that we are apt to look on our own faults with an eye prejudged in favours of them; therefore God has appointed this ordinance of mutual reproof and admonition that each one holding the glass to his neighbour's face, he may see his spots, and wipe them off.

There is an authoritative admonition and reproof administered by church-officers, in virtue of their office, not only to hearers promiscuously in the preaching of the word, but to persons particularly by themselves, in the way of discipline, 1 Tim. v. 20. 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.' Or privately, as Nathan did to David. See 1 Thes. v. 12. 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them—' which are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.' The which, though privately administered, is public, in respect of the public person who gives it. But of this we speak not.

There is a charitable admonition and reproof belonging to private persons, in virtue of the law of charity or love, which makes them monitors of, and reprovers to one another. This in respect of the objects of it is two-fold:

1. General; common to all men within or without the church, whether visible members of the mystical body or not. It goes as wide as the holy law carries



carries love to our neighbour. We are not to confine our charitable admonitions and reproofs to saints by profession, more than our love of benevolence and beneficence to them, We owe this duty, even to those of the world lying in wickedness, Eph. v. 11. 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,' compare with ver. 8, 12. and ought to do it, if so we may contribute to the plucking of the brands out of the burning.

It is true there are some arrived at such a daring pitch of wickedness, that there is not the least hope of doing them good by admonition and reproof; but on the contrary, they are in hazard of being the worse of them. Concerning such our Lord's rule is, Matth. vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.' But we should take heed that we do not rashly put men in this class: they may be the worse of a reproof at one time, who may be bettered by it at another time. And besides, a testimony against sin may be necessary, even in the case of such a one, in respect of others, witnesses thereto. But neither is it of this sort of admonition and reproof we speak. But,

2. Fraternal or brotherly admonition and reproof, competent to the visible members of the mystical body among themselves, 2 Thess. iii. 15. Though we owe this duty and kindness to all men, yet it is plain there are special obligations to it on saints by profession towards one another, and especially on communicants, who sit at one table of the Lord together. They are one body; they owe more than a common, viz. a brotherly love to one another; therefore, as in the natural body, one hand washes the other by special duty; so let all communicants, and all saints by profession, know that they are obliged in conscience to mutual brotherly admonition and

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reproof,

reproof, as they 'are one body, and members one  
'of another,' Rom. xiii. 5. And the sacraments,  
whether baptism or the Lord's-supper, much more  
both bind them thereto.

This ordinance and special duty of church-commu-  
nion, which would be of exceeding usefulness, if  
rightly managed, as it is, alas, very little in use in  
our degenerate age, is so often marred, when it is  
used, that matters are made worse thereby, and the  
disease takes strength from the remedy. People's  
minds are alienated one from another; grudges are  
raised betwixt the parties; and so it is an occasion of  
evil. This ariseth from two causes.

I. The indiscreet management of the reprove, who  
often ministers his remedy in such a manner, as it is  
apt to irritate the corruption of his brother, instead  
of exciting his grace or goodness, as it ought. To  
rectify this, and remove the grand hinderance of be-  
nefit by this duty, I lay before you these following  
things,

1. Look upon this duty of fraternal admonition  
and reproof as an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
appointed by him, in his visible mystical body, for the  
spiritual good of the body. It is as really so, as preach-  
ing, prayer, sacraments, &c. are, Matth. xviii. 15.  
'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee,  
'go and tell him his fault between thee and him a-  
'lone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy  
'brother.' It has a blessing annexed to it, Prov.  
ix. 8. 'Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee.'  
The consideration of this might influence men to go  
about it with awful solemnity, and to fear its being  
marred in their hands.

2. Begin at home, in thy own life and conversa-  
tion, to purge it, Matth. vii. 3, 5. 'And why be-  
'holdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye?  
'and considerest not the beam that is in thine own  
'eye?—First cast out the beam out of thine own  
'eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the  
mote

‘mote out of thy brother’s eye.’ A man who attempts to reprove his brother, and is guilty in the same or the like offence, is like a profane minister reproving profanity, who cannot expect success, but to have it cast up to him, *Physician cure thyself*. And this may let one see the mischief his untenderness does, not only in involving him in personal guilt, but in the guilt of his neighbour’s sin too, whom he puts himself out of capacity to do good to.

*Quest.* Is one in such a case free from this duty then? *Ans.* No, by no means; one’s own sin can never free him from this natural duty. His business is to set about the work, removing the impediment of the success by repentance before the Lord; and to accuse himself and profess resolution to amend, in the first place, to his brother, and then to admonish him of his fault.

3. Be not precipitant and rash in your reproofs, but proceed on knowledge of the offence, in which so much moral certainty is required, as one cannot be justly blamed for rashness in thinking his brother to have offended so and so. The too ready crediting every thing that is spoken to our brother’s disadvantage, or judging a thing to be an offence which may be is none; a readiness to take others men’s actions by the wrong handle, when there is a right one, and thereupon to reprove them, will more argue the want of that charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. than prudent zeal for God’s honour and our brother’s good: yet in doubtful matters, it will often be found duty prudently to insinuate that there is a suspicion, and what way he ought to remove it, 1 Thess. v. 22. ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil.’

4. Let love to God’s honour, and your brother’s good, be the principle from which your admonition or reproof proceeds, and let it appear so, as much as may be to his conviction, 2 Thess. iii. 15. ‘Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,’ 2 Cor. ii. 4. ‘For out of much affliction

‘and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many  
 ‘tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye  
 ‘might know the love which I have more abundant-  
 ‘ly unto you.’ So little of this appears in the re-  
 proofs of many, that they seem to the reprov-er ra-  
 ther reproaches than reproofs, and to shew more  
 contempt of the offender than love to him; and so  
 the benefit by them is marred.

5. Be sure to found your admonitions or reproofs  
 on the word of God, and convey them to your bro-  
 ther in a word of the holy scripture, the proper ve-  
 hicle of a medicine for the soul or conscience, Gal.  
 iii. 16. ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,  
 ‘in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one ano-  
 ‘ther.’ How else can you think to reach his con-  
 science. The word is the instrument wherewith the  
 Spirit works, and upon which we have ground to  
 expect the blessing. And happy is he in whom the  
 word dwells richly for this end.

6. Let it be managed with meekness, Gal. vi. 1.  
 ‘Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.’ Zeal  
 and meekness are very consistent; they are fruits of  
 the same Holy Spirit. Beware of mixing your own  
 passions with this duty; that is to bring common fire  
 to God’s altar, which marrs the acceptance of the sa-  
 crifice with God, and is ready to marr the success of it  
 with your brother, James i. 20. ‘For the wrath of  
 ‘man worketh not the righteousness of God.’ O! it  
 is hard to hold off splitting on this rock! Moses dash-  
 ed on it, though the meekest man on earth, Numb.  
 xx. 10. *Ye rebels*—Which should make us jealous of  
 ourselves upon such an occasion. Happy is that man,  
 who, when he declares God’s wrath, can best hold  
 down his own. In a special manner use mildness when  
 the offence is a personal injury against yourselves.  
 Men who are like lions in their own cause, and lambs  
 in the cause of God, are selfish naughty men. They  
 who are like lions in their own cause, and in God’s  
 too, owe their pretended zeal to their own spirits,  
 not



not to the Spirit of God; but they who are as lambs in their own cause, but as lions in God's cause, leave convictions in the breasts of others, that they are acted by God's Spirit.

7. Be patient and continue at the duty as occasion offers, though the fruit doth not soon appear, or tho' one and the same person may give frequent occasion, 2 Pet. i. 13. 'Yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance,' Luke xvii. 3, 4. 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee, seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.' Thus the Lord deals with us with long suffering; so should we with our brethren. We should hold on as long as there is any hope of doing good by it.

*Quest.* What should we do, when all we can do appears to be fruitless, and to no purpose? *Ans.* Our Lord's directions are very plain in this case, tho' very little practised, Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17. 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican.'

*Lastly,* Be sure to take the fittest season for discharge of this duty. Every thing is beautiful in the season thereof, and there is a season for reproof, Eccl. iii. 7. 'The Spirit of the Lord takes notice of Abigail's observing it with her husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 36. And of the blessed man it is said, he brings forth fruit in his season, Psal. i. 3. Unseasonable reproofs rarely do good, but often much harm.

II. An undue entertainment of it by the reprov'd. God has prescribed, in his word, how admonitions and reproofs are to be taken as well as how to be given. They are to be received, (1.) with love and esteem of the party that does us that good office, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. As we esteem the physician that would cure us of bodily blemishes, so him that endeavours to cure us of spiritual blemishes much more. (2.) With humbleness of mind, suffering ourselves to be told of our faults, in order to our amendment, Heb. xiii. 22. 'And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. So David, Ps. cxli. 5. 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' (3.) With a practical answering the end of it. Thus our Lord calls hearing of our brother, Matt. xviii. 15. Compare Prov. xv. 31, 32. 'The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. — He that heareth the reproof getteth understanding.'

But where are they to be found who thus entertain admonitions and reproof? Nay, the most part cannot endure to be reprov'd or admonish'd of any thing amiss in their way. Instead of giving a Christian entertainment to admonition or reproof, their proud hearts rise in passion against him that dares tell them their faults; they will defend their deeds, which, in calm blood, their own conscience condemns; and if they can gather any dirt against the reprov'r, right or wrong, they will be sure to fling it in his face on that occasion. This deserves to be lamented with tears of blood, if we could command them. To such I would say.

1. Admonition and reproof is an ordinance of Christ, appointed by him in his church among the visible members of his body, Mat. xviii. 15. and downwards, 1 Tim. v. 20. Why are ye angry at your brother for doing his duty he is oblig'd to do, under the pain of the Lord's displeasure? Why will ye be reckoned

reckoned members of Christ's family, and will not submit to the ordinances and laws of his house? Is it fit the church of Christ should be as when there was no king in Israel, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes.

2. It is that which thy brother has a special interest in, and a right to see to, as being a member of the body. Nothing more ordinary than, What are you concerned? The eye might as well question the concern of the hand in drawing a mote out of, or the face in wiping a spot off it. 'And the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee'—1 Cor. xi. 21. His concern is plain, he is a visible member of the same body with you, and your faults which give offence, affect him and the body too. In a corporation of tradesmen, every member has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the corporation. In a neighbourhood of husbandmen, every one has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the neighbourhood. Yet, in a society of Christians by profession, one may not be allowed to reprove another for what is done against the laws of Christianity. *Be astonished, O ye heavens!*

3. It is thy own interest, and the advantage of thy soul, to be admonished and reproved for thy faults. Prov. vi. 23.—'Reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' It is a real kindness done to thee, Ps. cxli. 5. Why wilt thou be angry with thy mercy? Many are ruined through the want of a faithful friend to admonish them of what is amiss in their way. Men do not readily espy their own faults in full light; and when they have none to say it is ill they do, they are apt to flatter themselves in their iniquity to their own ruin. But admonition and reproof is the way to repentance and reformation.

4. The trial of thy state whether thou be a real Christian or not, depends more on the way of entertaining admonition and reproof than thou art aware of, Prov. ix, 8. 'Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:

' thee : rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.' It is a good sign of a gracious soul, to entertain it in a Christian way, Prov. xv. 5. ' He that regardeth reproof is prudent.' It speaks a humble soul, one ready and willing to know his faults, and amend them, to whom conscience is dearer than credit, and the approbation of God than the applause of men. But, on the contrary, it is a very black mark in one not to bear admonition and reproof, Prov. xii. 1. ' Whoso loveth instruction, loveth knowledge : but he that hateth reproof, is brutish, and chapter xv. 12. See how the Spirit of God describes a wicked generation, Isa. xxix. 21. ' That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate.'--Amos v. 10. ' They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.' This temper of spirit speaks a man to be unwilling to see his sin, and therefore unwilling to part with it ; a lover of darkness rather than light, a lover of his own credit, more than God's honour ; to be proud, selfish, without due regard either to God or his brother. It is true, a good man may, at a time, take a just reproof very ill, as Aza, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. but it is not the habitual disposition of his spirit.

*Lastly*, Not taking with admonition and reproof is a forerunner of ruin, Prov. xv. 10. ' He that hateth reproof shall die ;' and xxix. 1. ' He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' As it is a high pitch of sin, and runs up the offence to a height, so it is a presage of the approach of a heavy stroke.—' Let no man strive, nor reprove another : for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet shall fall with thee in the night,'—Hos. iv. 4, 5. They who will not take an admonition or reproof from their brethren, may expect God will reach them one from heaven, that they shall not get shifted. It is a terrible remark made on Eli's sons their not tak-

ing



ing with reproof, 1 Sam. ii. 25. — ' They hearken-  
' ed not to the voice of their father, because the Lord  
' would slay them.' See Prov. v. 12. The sum of  
what is said you may find Prov. xxv. 12. ' As an ear-  
' ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold : so is a  
' wise reprovcr upon a disobedient ear." Let the re-  
prover manage wisely, and the reprovcd entertain it  
obediently, so shall it be profitable to both. The im-  
pediments thus removed, I would press this duty of  
brotherly admonition and reproof among all the vi-  
sible members of the mystical body, all saints by pro-  
fession, and communicants particularly. Admonish  
and reprove one another, for what ye discern to be  
offensive in one another's way. Make conscience of  
this duty.

*Motive* 1. For the sake of the Head, that is, for  
Christ's sake. The sins of professors and commu-  
nicants do, in a special manner, reflect dishonour  
on Jesus Christ, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And therefore while  
we see the visible members of that body dishonour-  
ing their Head, our hearts should stir within us for  
that dishonour. Here is a fair occasion to vent our  
zeal for Christ, to declare our sympathy with him,  
Psal. lxxix. 9. ' The reproaches of them that reproach-  
' ed thee are fallen upon me.' And, in such a case  
ye are upon your trials as to what regard ye have  
to his honour.

2. For the sake of the body. The welfare of the  
mystical body lies in the welfare of the members : it  
cannot be right while the members are wrong. Con-  
sider the offending party as a member of the body,  
and thou wilt see the body of Christ is concerned in  
his not walking with a straight foot, which may stir  
the eup to admonish him. Scandalous practices or of-  
fensive steps in a member, reflect dishonour on the  
whole body, Ecel. ix. 18. Yea, and the contagion,  
if not timely prevented, is apt to creep from one  
member to another, and so annoy the whole body,  
Heb. xii. 15. — ' Lest any root of bitterness spring-  
ing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.'

For

For this cause Paul openly reprov'd Peter, Gal. ii. 14.

3. For the sake of the offending member. It is one of the greatest offices of love thou canst do to his soul, to admonish him of his offence, James v. 19, 20. 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' Thou wilt thereby do him a double kindness. (1.) Remove sin from off him, which is a load so much the more dangerous, as he is not aware of it, Lev. xix. 17. It is hating of him, in God's account, not to rebuke him, as it would be not to draw him out of a mire, when he is sticking in it. If he had disjointed a leg or arm, wouldst thou not set it again if thou couldst? Such harm do wrong steps in a Christian's way to his soul; therefore—'if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, Gal. vi. 1.

(2.) Prevent his sinning more in that way. One wrong step, if not righted, makes way for another; and much guilt is contracted by one's not being told of his fault, being in that case, 'like a son left to himself, who brings his father to shame;' whereas a faithful reproof might prevent the repeating of the same folly. And as it would thus be a kindness to him in respect of the putting away of sin, so consequently in preventing strokes from the hand of the Lord.

4. For your own sake. God has laid this duty upon you, under the pain of his displeasure, so your own interest is engaged here. As ye would not partake of other men's sins, make conscience of this duty, without which the guilt will creep over on your own souls, and the punishment thereof with it, Eph. v. 11. And why should one by the neglect of his duty, adopt other men's sins, defile his own conscience,

science, and marr his peace with God? better displease all the world, than make a breach betwixt God and our own souls.

5. For the sake of the common badge of the visible mystical body of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments, 1 Tim. vi. 1. Is it not cutting to hear men say, Take up your professors, your communicants? O that professors would consider the Christian profession to be of that dignity, and so tender a point that they might tremble to think of bringing a stain upon it by their loose walking! O that communicants would remember, that though the partaking of the Lord's table is in itself a passing action, yet it is an abiding holy sign, whereby they are externally distinguished for Christ; and that they would beware of such practices as may render their badge mean and despised in the eyes of the world, Or if some will be so untender as not duly to regard it, that others would be so tender thereof as to check them for their offensive carriage, out of a regard to the holy badge of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments.

*Lastly*, For the sake of those who are not of the body, but of the world lying in wickedness. It is a piece of Christian duty to regard these, Col. iv. 5. 'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.' God writes his impartiality in his judgements, in not passing by the offences of those called by his own name, Isa. xlii. 4. And it would much contribute to commend religion to those who are strangers to it, and impress them with honourable thoughts of the communion of saints, if the members of it were faithful to check every thing among themselves, Acts v. 1. and downwards, compare with verse 13. otherways snares and stumbling-blocks are laid before the blind world.

4. Walk holily and tenderly, so as your conversation may be exemplary and edifying to one another, Matt. v. 16. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. xiv. 19. The church,

church, in scripture language is often called heaven, and every member thereof ought to be a shining light there, and not the pastors only, Phil. ii. 15. 16. 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life.—This is the most effectual way of edifying one another.' viz. by a holy example. And it is one great advantage of church-communion, whereby one's soul is edified, while the members labour so to walk. For understanding of this, two things are to be marked.

1. There is a holiness of heart, and a holiness of conversation, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. The former is the spring of the latter; the former lies in the inner man, and the latter in the outward. Holiness of heart is a personal duty, which not the church, but God and one's own conscience can take notice of directly: therefore I speak not of it, while treating of the duties of the members of the body one to another. Holiness of conversation is a relative duty, in so far as our fellow-members ought to see it in us all, and may see it where it is to their own edification: and we owe it as an indispensable duty to the body whereof we are members, viz. That our conversation be exemplarily holy and tender, Cant. i. 8. For we are not only to know Christ, and speak of him, but to live unto him, Philip. i. 21. 'For me to live is Christ'—This is the holiness and tenderness I speak of.

2. Though it is abominable hypocrisy to do good works to be seen of men, that we may gain their applause; yet it is not only lawful, but a necessary duty of Christianity, and particularly of church-communion, to walk so as your walk may be exemplary, and to have an eye to the edification of others in walking tenderly before them, Matth. v. 16. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may



' may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' 2 Thess. iii. 9. Though our internal religion lies only betwixt God and us, yet our outward acts are apt to be copied by our brethren; therefore we should endeavour to get the copy fair, chiefly to please God, and next to edify our brethren.

Now this exemplary, tender, holy walking, required of every visible church member, for edifying the fellow-members of the body, hath many branches, being as broad as the whole law of God on the outward man. I shall reduce them to these two general heads.

1. Be exemplarily holy and tender with respect to the doing part of religion and a holy life, Luke i. 6. The members of Christ are not to be idle, but active, dying to sin, and living unto righteousness. Be exemplarily holy and tender.

(1.) With respect to duty, Eccles. ix. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' Let your conversation be filled up with the performance and conscientious discharge of every duty required at your hands, that it may be uniform, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,' Ps. cxix. 6. Let your duty be conscientiously performed in all the parts of it; since he is your Creator and Redeemer, refuse him no piece of required service, for ye are wholly his, Acts xxvii. 23. Be conscientious in your duty to man, for God's sake, and so join in your practice what God has joined in the commandment, Acts xxiv. 16. Neglect not personal duty which lies betwixt you, Tit. ii. 12. and have a special regard to the duties of your station, and the relation wherein ye stand; if ever you would have your conversation edifying. God has set every one of us in some station and relation, and the conscientious practice of the duty of our respective stations makes a man or woman shine, however low a sphere they move in,

1 Tim. vi. 1. 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed,' 1 Peter iii. 1. 2. There is no person who may not this way edify the body of Christ, and be an useful member for their own and other's good.

(2.) With respect to sin, Jude, verse 23. O the mischief done by the sinful liberty church members take to themselves! they fearlessly break down, and go over the holy hedge, and others, seeing them before, do follow after, and so they prove ruining to themselves and others too, Matth. xviii. 7. Think no sin little, since it is an offence against a great God, and makes way for greater, not only in ourselves but in others too. For the sake of the head, and the rest of the members, abhor it as hell, Rom. xii. 9. and 1 Thess. v. 22.

(3.) In the practice and use of indifferent things. There the apostle's rule should take place, Rom. xv. 1. 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.' 'Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.' It is not enough that the thing is in itself lawful; ye are also, in respect of your brother, to consider if it be expedient, 1 Cor. vi. 12. What is in itself indifferent, may in its circumstances be rendered in so far unlawful to you, as ye cannot do it without the scandal of your brother, Rom. xiv. 20. The neglect of this is one of the crying sins of this day. Men consider their own selves, without regard to others, and hence fearlessly lay stumbling-blocks before others. The sense of the duties of church-communion is much lost among all parties in this church this day: in the natural body a thing will be refused, though it be good for the stomach if it be ill for the head, &c. But, in this degenerate generation, the members of the visible mystical body are grown so selfish, that to  
please

please themselves they can drive over others, without any regard to their good or hurt.

2. Be exemplary holy and tender in the suffering part of religion. And be so for the edification of the body. Others have been so for our good, Heb. xii. 1. so should we be for the good of others. What crosses and afflictions the Lord may be pleased to lay on you, bear christianly, with patience, submission, and resignation, bringing forth the fruit of them, Rom. xii. 12. 'Rejoicing in hope: patient in tribulation: continuing instant in prayer.' They are trials, and in them we ought to carry so, as God may be honoured and our brethren edified, while we are by divine providence brought upon the stage to undergo our respective trials. Consider here,

(1) God, in laying afflictions on some of his people, has an eye to others good, as well as that of the afflicted party: even as blood is let out of the arm or foot, not for the good of the arm or foot only, but the good of the whole body; tho' it is only one member that gets the wound, yet the design is for the rest of the members too, 2 Cor. i. 6. 'And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.' As when one is examined, the rest are instructed; when one of the children of a family are chastized, the rest are thereby bettered; so our gracious God often teaches many at the expence of one only.

(2.) A Christian behaviour under trouble is one of the most influential points of Christian practice likely to have the greatest efficacy on others, spectators of it and witnesses to it, or to whose knowledge it may come, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Hence the blood of the martyrs was said to be the seed of the church; and the cause of the gospel never lost by persecution, while the persecuted were honestly car-

ried through. Doing well is ready to influence others, but suffering well is far more so. A cross carried evenly and christiandy has a certain force to draw others to imitation, and it is most admired.

(3.) Those who, by reason of their afflictions, seem to themselves to be laid by as useless, are mistaken; they have a most precious opportunity put into their hand, to be serviceable to Christ and the members of his body, Col. i. 24. 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake.' God has brought them forth on the stage, to take trial of their suffering graces, for the instructing, exciting, strengthening, and edifying of others. Job was a man who did much for God in his day; but the suffering part of his life has been of the greatest use in all ages since, and will be to the end. The psalmist David complains, Psal xxxi. 12 that he was 'like a broken vessel;' but every sherd of that broken pot has been of good use to the church of Christ since, and has helped to heal many.

(4.) Wherefore Christians, under their afflictions, ought to consider that they suffer as members of the body, bearing that part allotted for them of the sufferings appointed for mystical Christ; for the sufferings of Christ personal are at an end, but the sufferings of Christ mystical are but yet a-filling up, Coloss. i. 24. This would arm them with patience, as considering their particular trials to be, in some sort, a common cause for the good of others as well as their own; and may excite them, in the blackest lines of providence, to cast such a fair copy as others may write after.

To press this duty of church-communion, consider,

1. The interest of God's name and honour in it, John xv. 8. 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' The fruitfulness of those who are planted in the house of the Lord brings much glory to the Master of the house; and their barrenness brings much dishonour



to him before the world. And should not the one be vigorously pursued, and the other guarded against, by all those whom he has 'called into the fellowship of his Son?'

2. The interest of your fellow-members in it. It is a dark world; they are the most useful in the communion of saints, who must shine as lights: Every action of yours, every piece of your carriage, being in church-communion, is apt to be copied. By your tender example you may do good to many; by your untenderness you may prove stumbling-blocks to others.

3. The interest of the gospel in it, Tit. ii. 9, 10. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters—not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things' It is the glory of the gospel, that the power thereof appears in the lives of the professors thereof, stamping holiness and tenderness upon every part of their own walk: and, on the other hand, it brings great scandal on the doctrine of Christ that the professors of it are unholy in their lives.

*Lastly*, Your own interest is in it for time and eternity. As ye sow ye will reap, both for kind and quantity.

5. Bear one another's burdens of afflictions, crosses, temptations, and trials, Gal. vi 2. 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Heb. xiii. 3. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' 1 Cor. xii. 26. 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.'—This is a natural duty of the members of one body. That part of the communion of saints, which is above, is got quite beyond these; but those of them who are yet in the world, are in the place of trial, where the clouds return after the rain. But not being standing each one by himself, but in the body with other fellow-members,

bers, bearing their part of the sufferings allotted for the body, there is all reason that the afflicted's lot should be looked on as a common cause, and each one should help to bear the burden with them; their burden of simple affliction, or burden of temptation. And,

1. Have a cordial sympathy with them, and hearty concern in their afflictions and temptations; and so express it as they know it, Rom. xii. 15. Let your hearts be touched with the fellow feeling of the distresses of your brethren; and therefore 'put on 'bowels of mercy, &c. Col. iii. 12. and lay aside selfishness and unconcernedness with the case of others. It is a mortified member that is not touched with the pain of other members of the body; and he who has no kindly sympathy with the saints, in their troubles and temptations, seems not to partake of the spirit of that communion, Amos vi. 1, 6. 'Wo 'to them that are at ease in Zion—that drink wine 'in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the afflictions 'of Joseph.' And let them know it: for what comfort can it afford to them, though your bowels yearn toward them, if they understand it not: if they see it not, it as all a case to them as if it were not.

2. Bear their burden as it affects them, and not always as it would affect yourselves, Rom. xv. 1. Many weigh the afflictions and temptations of others in their own balance, so find them very light; and therefore pass them as unworthy of their concern, Job xlii. 5. 'He that is ready to slip with his feet, 'is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is 'at ease.' But the true way of judging of the weight of these things is, as they are apt to affect the afflicted party, and with that weight we should bear them, 2 Cor. xi. 29. 'Who is weak, and I am not 'weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' One more will disturb the eye, when a hundred of them lying on the hand will create no trouble, no hazard. Shall the hand then be unconcerned to pluck it out?

That

That may make a heavy affliction and dangerous temptation to one, which would be a very light one, and perhaps none at all to another. And it may be a greater act of Christian obedience in one to make his way through a temptation or affliction in itself small, than in another though ten times greater; as the widow's throwing in her mite was more than all the gifts of the rich men, Luke xxi. 1, 2. 3.

3. Let your mouths be opened to enquire into their griefs, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and your hearts open to receive their moans, Col. iv. 7; 8. 'All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you—' whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, 'that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.' If any member of the natural body be sore and wounded, how natural is it for the hand tenderly to uncover and open it up, the eye to pry with compassion on the several parts of the sore, &c. even when they cannot remove the trouble? Such is the case of human nature in the present state of weakness, that there is a kind of relief, though but a sorry one, in venting of their grief into the bosom of one where it may be better entertained with sympathy. The want of which makes afflictions and temptations often like a fire shut up, preying on one's spirits, Psalm xxxix. 3. and has made the best of men complain heavily, Micah vii. 1, 5 and downwards.

4. Comfort, encourage, advise, and direct them suitable to their case, 1 Theff. iv. 18. This is all that is within the compass of one's power to do for their afflicted brethren, in some cases, Matth. xxv. 36. And thus may one, by a word fitly spoken, be a happy instrument to refresh the bowels of the afflicted, and blunt the edge of temptation, 2 Tim. i. 16. Job. xvi. 5. 'I will strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.' And here a special tenderness is required; and, with a due regard to the circumstances of the afflicted, all harshness is to be evited, lest one

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add affliction to the afflicted; which was the rock Job's friends split upon, and caused him to make that effectual resentment, Job xvi. 4, 5.

5. What you can in conscience and reason, ward off, or carry off their burden, do it; for ye are *members one of another*, Rom. xii. 5. Phil. ii 4. 'Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' So ye are to give all your spiritual or temporal assistances to the lessening or removing of their trial in a way of duty. This should particularly appear in shielding one another's reputation, which is often blasted by venomous tongues and open ears, which together lay a heavy burden on the suffering party, Prov. xxv. 23.

6. In troubles and temptations from men, support and stand by the oppressed for their deliverance, especially in the cause of Christ and religion, 2 Tim. iv. 16. 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.' and chap. i. 16, 17. 'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me.' We are not born for ourselves, but for God's honour and the good of our brethren. And the leaving of those helpless, on whom, by the divine providence, the storm of the trial or temptation falls, is a forsaking, and being ashamed of the cause of Christ in the world. Thus ought we to bear one another's burden, as members of the body of Christ. To stir you up to which necessary duty, consider,

*Lastly*, Earnest prayer is to be made to God for your brethren under their trials, that they may be supported, refreshed, and delivered, according to the will of God; and this whether their trials be from the immediate hand of God or man, Acts xii. 5. 'Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for



‘for him.’ 2 Theff. iii. 1, 2. ‘Finally, brethren, pray for us...that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.’ This is a special way of bearing one another’s burdens, to bear them before the throne of grace, and to wrestle with God for them there. This is one of the great advantages of the communion of saints, *viz* a communion of prayers, that when any known weight lies upon a member, the rest cry unto the Head on behalf of it. And here I offer four things,

(1.) It is much to be wished that Christians praying together, when occasionally meeting, were more in use. And particularly, that those who are in distress would not only require ministers or elders to pray with them, but even fellow christians visiting them, and that such should readily comply with such a desire, both observing circumstances so as to discern when and in what cases it may be to edification. It is very agreeable to the communion of saints, and to that love and sympathy which ought to be among the members of Christ.

(2.) As it is a commendable practice in the church, to require public prayers on behalf of the sick, or those otherways afflicted; and as the minister is the mouth of the congregation, so ye would consider that ye ought affectionately to join in these prayers as parties nearly concerned, and whose prayers for the afflicted are desired, forasmuch as the prayers desired are the prayers of the congregation, and not the minister’s only. The language of these prayers, is, Brethren, pray for us. And therefore, I beseech you, let not this be a matter of mere form to you, in which you may only notice what is begged for them; but let your hearts go along with the words even the length of the throne, for a brother or sister in distress.

(3.) Carry home with you the case of those to your family and secret prayers; and confine not your concern for them within the walls of the church. If

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the afflictions of others do touch your heart as they ought, you may carry a copy of the paper home with you on your sympathizing hearts, to mind you to put up petitions for them in your families and in secret. If ye have neglected this formerly, mend it in time to come, and, when you have done it, know ye have done no more than what is your duty, Heb. xiii. 3. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.'

(4) Some cases of others in affliction may require of you extraordinary prayer, by setting some time apart for that very end, either yourselves alone, or in conjunction with fellow-Christians. So David, in the case of the child---'fasted, and went in and lay all night on the earth,' 2 Sam. xii. 16. And so in the case of Peter in prison, Acts xii. 12---'many were gathered together in the house of Mary, praying. The serious consideration of the kind of the affliction, and of the person under it, with respect to the honour of God, the good of the church, and your own particular interest depending thereon, must determine these cases.

I will add, That where prayers are desired for those in affliction, the affliction being removed, thanksgiving should likewise be desired. It is but the prevalency of an allowable custom, to give up notes for praying for the sick, and yet to give none for thanksgiving for the recovery of the party when recovered. If the congregation weep with them; it is reasonable they have occasion to rejoice with them too; if to petition for the mercy, to give thanks for it too, Luke xvii. 17. 18.

*Motive 1.* Consider it is the special command of your Head, Gal. vi. 2. it is a fulfilling of the law of Christ, viz. the law of love. Our Lord Jesus loved his people, so as to die for them, therefore he requires them particularly to love one another. His compassion to them was without a parallel, therefore

fore he will have them bear one another's burden. Here is the special reason why it is called the law of Christ.

2. Ye have the example of the Head for it. John xiii. 15. 'For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.' He is touched with all their afflictions, Isa. lxiii. 9. If any annoy them, he reckons himself persecuted, Acts ix. 4. A most tender sympathy he has with them—'For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye,' Zech. ii. 8. And as for their temptations, he is not unconcerned about them, Heb. iv. 15. Imitate your Head, O members of the body: sympathize with them whom Christ sympathizes with, lest ye pour contempt on those whom Christ honours, and forget the afflictions of those whom he tenderly remembers.

3. The trials and distresses of others are designed for your good, as was said before. Our merciful Father, in compassion to the rest, teaches them at the expence of one. Does it not then require your sympathy, that others are afflicted for your sake? Col. i. 24. Should not ye answer the design of providence, in exercising of those duties and graces which providence lays afflictions and temptations on others to bring forth into exercise on you? he lays on your fellow-members, to bring you and many others to the throne of grace.

4. What is thy brother's case to day may be thine to-morrow. Is he under affliction now? thou mayst be in the same hereafter, or in another as hard for thee to bear, as it is for him now to bear his. Is he under temptation? As fast as thou seemest to stand now, thou mayst be as low under the same or a worse to-morrow, as he is to day, Gal. vi. 1. 1 Cor. x. 12. Refuse him not that help of thee, which thou mayst need of him ere long. There is no trouble, no temptation, which befalls one member of the body, which another can certainly secure himself from.

*Lastly,* It is necessary to evidence thy being of the body

body, 1 Cor xii 26. Col. iii. 12. How can it be accounted a living member, that has not sympathy with the rest in pain; but that Christian sympathy of bearing one another's burden speaks union with the members of the Head. That hardness, selfishness and carelessness about the trials and temptations of others, which is found in many, cannot but darken the evidences of good people so far as it prevails, and cast them as naught in whom it reigns.

6. Edify one another by Christian-conference, Eph. iv. 29. 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' 1 Thess. v. 11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.' In so far as the body is made up of several Christians, they ought to have suitable conference, for the edification of one another as members, as they are brought together by divine providence. It is the duty of joint members, of any lawful society, to treat among themselves of the interests of it, and its concerns. Fellow travellers to one place are to be useful this way to one another. Christians are a society by themselves, the communion of saints, they are fellow travellers towards Zion: Christian conference is the native result of the relation. I shall branch out this in these things.

1. Those who by providence are cast together ordinarily, whether in a family or neighbourhood, so as they must ordinarily converse together, should labour to be useful to, and edify one another by their communications, Heb. iii. 13. 'But exhort one another daily while it is called, To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Religion should be carried by us into all our relations, and however we be posted in particular societies, we should always remember our general calling and relation, as visible members of the mystical body, that we converse together as becometh saints.

2. Occasional meetings of Christians together should be thus improv'd. There is a commandment 'to speak



‘ speak of those things while men walk by the way  
‘ together,’ Deut. vi. 7. We find the two disciples  
going to Emmaus thus exercised, and a happy issue of  
their conference, Luke xxiv. 14, 15. Were mens spi-  
rits habitually heavenly, even occasional encounters  
would produce something of this sort betwixt fellow  
Christians.

3. Christians meeting together on holy and spi-  
ritual sacred occasions, should, in a special manner, be  
thus improv’d, as on Sabbath-days, and at sermons.  
Then it is the day calls for it, and the Lord’s word  
and ordinances minister matter of Christian confer-  
ence. Days have been, when the people, going to  
or coming from ordinances, have been sweetly em-  
ploy’d this way, Psalm lv. 14. and, between sermons,  
either went along for prayer and meditation, or ga-  
thered together for Christian conference. But alas!  
this is much decayed, and among none more perhaps  
than among us. I often see people standing busy  
speaking together after the public worship is begun,  
and with my eye or voice, must labour to break off  
the conference, the which, if it were not worldly,  
would surely be broken off, by the beginning of the  
public worship. The worldly discourse in our church-  
yard † has been, and is an offence and stumbling-  
block to strangers, and is like to turn the reproach  
of the place, whereby God is highly dishonoured.  
This is a horrid profanation of the Lord’s day, an  
open contempt of it and his ordinances, which speaks  
the gospel senseless and tasteless to you, and is a pre-  
sage of a stroke, Neh. xiii. 18. Alas! how think ye  
one should preach to people making such preparation  
for hearing? How should ye profit by preaching af-  
ter such communications? Isa. lviii. 13. 14. How  
shall we pray for God’s blessing on your labours and  
substance, or look to be heard, when ye sacrilegious-

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† What the worthy author here complains of is far from  
being a singular case, but may too justly be applied to most  
other cases.

ly rob God of his own day, at this rate? I beseech you for the Lord's sake, and your own soul's sake, and as ye would not provoke the Lord to leave me as an idol-shepherd among you, who shall have no power to profit your souls, reform this practice, and either go by yourselves for prayer and meditation, or converse like Christians.

4. Fellow-Christians should communicate their cases one to another, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and strengthen, instruct, and edify one another, Psalm lxvi. 96. The wise man observes, that 'two are better than one: for if the one fall, the other will lift him up,' Eccl. iv. 10. And happy are they who have a friend in need. How many might have instruction in what they know not, the edge of temptations blunted, their hearts warmed, and their souls bettered, by a mutual communication of cases, troubles, temptations, and experiences.

5. Appointed private meetings of several Christians together, for prayer and Christian conference for their mutual edification, provided it marr not family-worship, nor be improven to the prejudice of public ordinances, as they are warranted by the word of God, so might be of good use (if rightly improven) to the advancement of religion, Acts xii. 12. Mal. iii. 16. By this means Christians might improve both in gifts and grace, in knowledge and love, and they have been blessed of God to these holy ends unto many: and ordinarily, in parishes where the gospel begins to thrive, they are set up almost as naturally as the birds draw together in the spring: and where the gospel work is going back, they decay, owing their fall, either to coldness in God's matters creeping in, or to the fiery heat of division.

*Motive 1.* The necessity and usefulness of it is great. It is necessary and useful for the honour of God, 1 Peter ii. 9. for the good of our brethren, Rom. xiv. 19. and for our own good. Prov. xi. 25. The tongue is called our glory, because it is the instrument

strument of glorifying God, and so doing good to others: and, without this, men are chargeable with laying up their talents in a napkin, hiding their light under a bushel.

2. The thriving or decay of religion goes hand in hand with it. Look to the times wherein religion prospered, and you will find that 'they who feared the Lord spake often one to another;' and as that wore away, so religion decayed. Nearest the heart nearest the mouth. Where the fire is burning on the hearth, the smoke is going forth of the chimney. Where religion is lively in the heart, it will appear in men's converse.

*Lastly*, Times of abounding sin and approaching wrath is a special season for it, and calls the fearers of God to set about it, Mal. iii. 16. Such is the day in which we live, 'wherein iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold,' God is removing the pillars, and his judgements are abroad in the world, and lesser strokes are sent as forerunners of greater.

7. And lastly, Be ready to assist the needy members, and to communicate of your worldly goods to the poor of the body, 1 John iii. 17. 18. 'But who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in the word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, Rom. xii. 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality.' It is much to be regretted, that many of the poor, especially the vagrant ones, have no semblance of piety or membership in the body of Christ. Yet even these have a right to supply from us, because they are God's creatures. But the poor saints have a double right to it, not only as God's creatures, but as members of Christ, and therefore the church is bound particularly to see to them, Gal. vi. 10. As we have therefore oppor-

‘tunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.’ The Lord in his wisdom has seen it meet to make some of his members poor in the world, not only for their own trial, but the trial of their brethren, who are obliged to supply them, Deut. xv. 11. ‘For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land,’ Matth. xxvi. 11. This duty I branch out in five particulars.

1. Seasonably act towards the relief of those members who are fallen into decay in the world, as ye have opportunity, Lev. xxv. 35. ‘And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, tho’ he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee.’ As the keeping of a man that is stumbling from quite falling down, is much alike with helping him up when he is fallen, so the relieving of a man at the brink of poverty, is much alike with relieving him in it. This duty I take to be aimed at, Luke vi. 35. ‘But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.’ And if it were more exercised, there would be fewer poor than there are.

2. Abound in private distribution towards the poor members, at your houses, or otherways as you have occasion for it, Matt. vi. 3. Heb. xiii. 16. ‘But to do good, and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.’ Occasions of this nature are ordinary, which try what sort of stewards we are of the good things of this life which providence has put into our hand. It was Job’s comfort, in his poverty, that when he was wealthy, he communicated of what he had to the poor, Job xxxi. 19. and downward.

3. Conscientiously give in to the Sabbath’s collections to be distributed by the church. God has appointed these, and the Lord Jesus has appointed church-



church-officers, Acts vi. 1. What they are to give out is to come into their hands by the church-collections, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. 'Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.' So this matter of the Sabbath days collections is not to be looked upon as a business of mere fashion, but as a divine ordinance in the church, which should make people, out of conscience towards God, to give in to it, in suitable proportion to the substance God has put in their hands.

4. Grudge not extraordinary distributions, not only towards those of our congregations, but of other churches, whom you never saw, nor will perhaps see in the face, Rom. xv. 26. 'For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution of the saints which are at Jerusalem.' This is a duty of the communion of saints; for all the churches and congregations of saints in the world make but one body of Christ, and they who are at the greatest distance from you are your brethren. Why should any then think themselves unconcerned with their distress.

*Lastly,* Be ready to give of your substance for pious uses, towards the advancing of the good of the body, which is the church, Prov. iii. 9. There are several occasions people have of laying out money for pious uses, which want of due consideration makes them to do grudgingly. But if thou hast an occasion put into thy hand, by this money to honour God, to bring about good for the souls of others, to contribute to the good of the church, thou art to look on it as a special duty of the communion of saints, and an occasion of bestowing it to a noble use.

As to what one is to give, every one must conscientiously determine that for himself: but here is the general rule, *viz.* That people are to give in a proportion to the necessity of their brethren, and their own ability, Rom. xii. 13. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. One is to eye,

1. The necessity of their brethren: for that may be too little for some, which may be more than enough to others whose straits are not so great. And withal, in weighing this their necessity, it is to be noticed, if the poor walk suitable to their condition; for neither religion nor reason requires us to foster them in voluntary idleness, or in living beyond the bounds of their condition, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.

2. Their own ability. What one gives must be his own, and not another's, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. Those to whom God has given much, of them much is required; those who have little, the less is required. Our own strait condition does not altogether excuse from it. The widow's two mites were required and accepted; yea, people are bound to labour for that they may have to give to the poor, Eph. iv. 28. 'Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hand the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' And whatever is in their power to do for them, they are obliged to do, Acts iii. 6.

*Mot.* 1. Consider our Lord Christ looks on what is given to his poor members as given to himself, and will make an honourable mention of it at the great day, Mat. xxv. 34, 36. 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me.' Christ is in them, his image upon them, they and he are one, and shall not their fellow-members regard them as such, in supplying of their necessities? We are to part with our all to him at his call. Sometimes he requires it by persecutors, and then we are to give it up at his call for his sake: sometimes by his needy members; and then also it is given to him, *Lent to the Lord.*

2. We are not absolute masters of our substance, but stewards of it, accountable to the Lord for our management. The church is God's household, and Christ has secured, by the covenant, necessities for this life

life to all that are his, Isa. xxxiii. 16.—‘Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.’ Only he has put the portion of the poor members in the hands of others, to give it out to them, according to their necessity, and what of it is in their hand, Luke. xvi. 10, 11, 12. Therefore we shall be unfaithful stewards, if we distribute not to the necessity of the saints.

3. They are fellow-members of the same body with you, and fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, Gal. vi. 10. ‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.’ The spiritual relation that is betwixt us and them challengeth it as a debt of love: Have we not all one father, one elder Brother, one Spirit knitting us to one Head, and one heritage for ever, to which men are admitted without respect of persons? Suppose several men were travelling together into a far country to receive a common inheritance, would not those who have abundance of spending money supply those who are run short in the way? So should we do with the poor saints.

4. It tends much to the honour of God, and the credit of the gospel and of the church. Every society looks on themselves as obliged to see to the supply of the wants of their members: and should not the communion of saints be exemplary therein, considering the most strait ties among them? By our Lord’s own verdict, ‘Giving is a more blessed thing than receiving,’ Acts xx. 35. therein we do in a special manner, appear in likeness to the Lord, Luke vi. 35, 36. And, Oh! should we not honour with our substance, him, ‘who, for our sakes, became poor, that we might be rich?’ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

*Lastly*, It has a reward of grace annexed to it, being rightly performed. It is the best way to secure a thorough bearing for us and ours, Prov. xxxviii. 27. ‘He that giveth to the poor shall not have lack.’ What we have is liable to many accidents; but laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for

for at our hand, Eccl. xi. 1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days.' What is thus laid out brings in to the giver, Prov. iii. 9, 10. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase : so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.' Solomon observes the accomplishment of it, Prov. xi. 24. 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.' And tho' our good works do not merit either the temporal or eternal reward of glory ; yet even the eternal reward will be according to our works, and that is an eternal truth, 2 Cor. ix. 6. 'But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.'

V. Admission to the Lord's table is a matter of the greatest weight and concern, to be managed and gone about with all solemn seriousness and caution. Whoso considers that, being one bread, we declare ourselves thereby one body of Christ, must needs see this, and that there is a great need to take heed to our feet in entering on that holy ground. And considering that the church is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the Head, there is need to look well who be admitted thereto as complete members of the visible body. And here it is evident,

1. That there ought not to be a promiscuous admission to the Lord's table, which some have contended for. It is not only contrary to our Lord's express command, Mat. vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,'—but contrary to the nature, use and ends of that ordinance. It is a distinguishing sign, to put a visible difference betwixt the communion of saints and the communion of sinners ; and therefore cannot be common to both : Shall the badge of the members of Christ be put upon those who bear Satan's mark upon their forehead ? Shall they be declared of the body of Christ, who are, to the conviction of the church, 'of the world lying in wickedness ?'

2. Admission to the Lord's table is an act of church-power



power and government : for, if the church be a body or society by itself, and the Lord's table the special privilege of that body, whereby one is declared and allowed to be of that body, there can be no lawful admission thereto, but in the way of church-power and government. For what corporation is there, whereunto one may be admitted without an act of the governing part of it ? Our Lord has appointed governors in his church, 1 Cor. xii 28. who have a power to admit to, and debar from the sacrament, Mat. vii. 6. and this belongs not to the minister alone, but to the society of ruling church-officers, that is, the minister and elders, for the keys of government, to which admission belongs, are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers, 2 Cor. ii. 6.

3. There ought to be a due trial of those who are admitted to the Lord's table, that it may be seen whether or not those who seek to be admitted are qualified according to the laws of the visible kingdom of Christ, lest such be brought in as may bring a stain on the society, and corrupt and defile them, instead of edifying them. This also flows from the nature of the church, as a separate society, and a communion of saints. For, to bring in hand over head, without consideration of the persons, is much a case with throwing open the doors of the sanctuary, that any who please may enter. It is true, since God only knows the heart, no doubt hypocrites and naughty persons may be let in as honest-hearted Christians ; the devil's goats may come in by their likeness to Christ's sheep ; but if their outside be promising, that is all the church can judge of, other things are left to God's judgement.

4. The whole matter is of the greatest weight and deepest concern ; and that,

1. To the admitters, who are, as it were, the porters of the Lord's house, and should look well whom they admit to the Lord's table, that it be not profaned through their default. There are two things requisite

requisite to give one a right, before the church, to the Lord's table.

(1.) A competent measure of knowledge ; without this people cannot examine themselves, nor rightly discern the Lord's body, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29. and they are declared none of the Lord's people, Isa. xxvii. 11. 'It is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will have no mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour : ' The minister, whose office it is to teach, is the most competent, though perhaps not the only judge in this point.

(2.) A blameless life, not scandalous and profane, Matth. vii 6. These cannot be fit guests at the holy table, whose conversation is openly wicked. And ministers and elders, who are, by their office, overseers of the manners of the people, are to enquire into this. And whoso duly considers it, will find it a most weighty piece of work.

2. To the church, and every member thereof : Is it not the concern of every one of the society, who be admitted as fellow-members of the body, to partake of the greatest privileges of the church ? It is the duty of all to do what in them lies, that God's ordinance be not profaned, that the communion of saints, which is one bread, receive not harm by the bringing in thereto such as will stain and defile it, and that they be not partakers of other mens sins. 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. ' Your glorying is not good : know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ? ' Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.'

*Quest.* What can and ought private Christians to do in this case ? *Answ.* If the case or offence of the party, being such as renders him unworthy to be admitted, cannot be removed with private admonition, either through the party's obstinacy, or the publicness of it, in that case, they ought to bring it to church-officers, in order to stop the admission, Matth.

xviii. 15. If they do not this, they partake of the guilt; if they do, they have delivered their own souls, though the church-officers do not their duty, and may partake with a good conscience.

3. To the party himself. It is the taking on of the external public badge of the communion of saints, a solemn declaration of his being one body with the members of Christ, the which must needs be of great concern to any one who duly considers how solemn and awful an action this is. To go about this work ignorantly, indeliberately, and rashly, without due preparation, is a taking of God's name in vain with a witness. Wherefore,

(1.) Let those who have a hand in admission to the Lord's table, be careful and conscientious to approve themselves to God in this weighty matter.

(2.) Let the whole communicants be concerned to see to it as they have opportunity.

(3.) Let persons looking that way duly consider the weight of the matter.

Those who have been once orderly admitted, may at every occasion thereafter claim their privilege in case they have kept free from public scandal. But as for those who have not yet been orderly admitted, they ought to make it a matter of time, that there be no hurry in their admission. I have often complained, that some never shew their desire of admission, till there be little time left either for themselves or us to consider of that weighty business. I have endeavoured to prevent that, by giving intimation some weeks before, but almost still in vain as to some. May we be helped to take some method hereafter that may prevent it, Is it not highly reasonable that those who by office are to see this, be satisfied, both as to the knowledge and conversation of those they must admit? And why should people be so conceited of themselves as not to allow a competent time for this? Let all consider.

1. The honour of Christ, how it is concerned in  
this

this matter, that that be not said concerning us, Rom. ii. 24—'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.'—The comely order of the Lord's house is for his sake to be carefully observed.

2. The ordinance is in danger of profanation, and all are in hazard of being guilty of it. The admitters bring guilt on themselves when they are negligent in this matter, Ezek. xliv. 7. 'In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread.' The whole church when they are not in their duty, Lev. v. 1. and the party, Ezek. xxiii. 39.

3. The church is in hazard of being defiled, Heb. xii. 15. 'Lest any root of bitterness springing up should trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' Some profane leaven brought in, may soon leaven the whole lump.

4. The party who comes unwarrantably runs a terrible risk, 1 Cor. xi. 27. 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'

*Lastly*, The sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be highly prized, and the partakers of it to walk worthy of their character and privilege.

1. Let all those who are come to the years of discretion duly value this high privilege, and timeously prepare themselves to partake of it. They must needs be under mighty prejudices, or very untender persons, who, without much ado, live without this ordinance, time after time.

2. Let those who are partakers remember their character, as declared visible members of the body of Christ, and walk towards the Lord, and towards one another, as those who are the Lord's by personal dedication, and live in church communion.

Thus have I shewn you what a society professors and communicants are, and what lies upon them by virtue of their being thus joined in church communion.

F I N I S.



